

An Exploration into the Thoughts and Emotions of Home-Educating Families; “The world is my classroom and life is my curriculum.”

Submitted by Kavita Solder to the University of Exeter
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Abstract

This research explored the views of home-educators and the young people in home-education around their reasons for opting out of school-based education, their level of satisfaction with their decision, what education looks like to them, aspirations for the future and perceived support from the Local Authority (LA).

Phase one took the form of a parent/carer questionnaire. The questionnaire was shared nationally and yielded sixty complete responses. Data has been analysed and is displayed in frequency tables and descriptive statistics.

Phase two implemented a case-study methodology. Recruitment for this part of the project was extremely difficult and possible reasons for this are explored. I visited five families, speaking to eight young people and either both or one parent. There were some structured arts-based activities which I used as a vehicle to open the dialogue with the young people. These sessions largely took place in the participants' home, or in another venue of their choosing.

With participants aged ten years and over, I adopted a narrative approach, with much guidance taken from Brown and Gilligan's (1993) "The Listening Guide." Phrases starting with "I" are taken from the participants' transcripts and used to create a poem which represents their story, constructs and feelings. These poems were then taken back to the young people in order to check that they were satisfied with the meaning that had been captured.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for analysing qualitative data was implemented as a tool for analysis across cases. Emergent themes included the value that home-educated families place on child-centred learning, allowing children to develop at their own rates and enabling them to pursue topics of interest. Implications for educational psychologists' (EPs) practice are discussed.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Overview

This research explores the topic of home-education. My personal interest in this area arose primarily through my experiences as a Year One Trainee educational psychologist. I observed my supervisor manage several cases where children were being home-educated for interim periods whilst awaiting school placements as well as cases where this was an ongoing arrangement. I was surprised by the large proportion of young people that I encountered involving home-education, the differing reasons behind parents' decisions and I was intrigued by the varying quality of provision that the young people were in receipt of. Beyond this, I was not able to identify why I had such a passion and interest in home-education. I had not been home-educated myself, and neither had any close friends or family. It was not until I became very invested in Phase Two of the research that, through my reflections, I identified some potential subconscious reasons that may have led to me being drawn towards this topic of study.

Speaking to the home-educating parents, I could see that they were not the mavericks that the literature and media sometimes portrayed them as. Nor were they causing a scene with their views, instead, they were quietly making a stand through their choice to opt out of the school system and were instead operating, rather successfully, in a less rigid alternative. Some of the families I visited had what might be considered as a non-mainstream approach to their lifestyle too, in terms of their dietary choices, values and clothing.

I drew some parallels to this group of home-educators. I am of mixed race and as such, whilst I look like I should belong with a certain group of people; values and beliefs wise, I actually fit with another. At times, particularly growing up, this could be difficult and I would describe it as operating on the peripheries on groups rather than belonging. The more I learned about each family, the more I felt that they were, to some degree, operating on the

peripheries too. I found each family's story genuinely touching and was particularly moved by the way that the young people spoke about their school-attending peers. All participants expressed a preference for home-education but they all could see that school was an option that better suited some people.

Upon my reflective journey, I thought about my very first piece of psychological research that I completed as part of my A-Level studies. This involved observations of people who crossed the road at times other than when the green man was showing; also known as jaywalkers. I was interested in whether jaywalkers were more likely to take action in groups or individually. My current project, although a different topic, has some similarities in so far as it is researching a minority group and to some extent has its roots in conformity.

My current research seemed to dominate my time and energy, as one would expect, so often became the topic of conversation with family and friends. I soon found that everyone seemed to have an opinion on home-education whether founded or unfounded. I hope that this research can go some way to inform practitioners and the public about a largely unknown group of people, as accurately as possible share the stories of some families and be a catalyst for thinking about how this group can be better supported or integrated.

1.1 Terminology

In order to understand the debates and issues around home-education, it must first be clearly defined. What initially may seem a very basic concept, does in fact become more complex as the social and cultural contexts are considered.

“Home education is the education of children in around the house by their parents or by those appointed by parents. It can be seen as a

temporary or permanent alternative to the education which is provided by the state or by private schooling.” (Petrie, 1993, p. 139)

Petrie provides a very comprehensive definition of home-education, however thinking about the word ‘education’ in relation to cultural and societal norms can cause controversy with some even considering the very phrases ‘home-education’ to be an oxymoron. This is because, as Davies (2015) argues, “the word ‘education’ has become synonymous with ‘schooling,’ and the role of parents reduced to that specified by home-school contacts.” (pp.534) As such, Davies argues that some find it difficult to comprehend that education can occur outside of the school environment. Thomas (1998) also explains the generally held societal view stating that, “Schooling is now so ingrained in our culture we have come to believe there can be no education without it.” (pp. 1) However, Thomas also progresses to explain that “while good classroom practice no doubt maximises learning within the classroom, it does not follow that there may not be other equally or more efficient ways in which children can learn.”

Monk (2009) expresses dissatisfaction with the term ‘home-education’ claiming that it ‘tells us very little.” (p.157) He refers to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2014) definition which describes home-education as taking place in the home rather than school and very clearly distinguishes the difference between home-education and other non-school based forms of education. The definition states that “it is not home tuition provided by a local education authority or where a local education authority provides education otherwise than at school.” Monk (2009) argues that this definition fails to capture the “myriad of practices, motivations and locations for home-education.” (p.157) He states that having the label of home-education simply describes the legal status of a child’s education rather than anything about the form of education itself. He progresses to explain that, according to the DfES definition, home-education does not necessarily mean that the parents will be involved in the education, or that it will take place in the home. For example, the education could be taking place in the community or by a private tutor. Monk concludes that the term home-education is unhelpful and vague leading to stereotypes and consequently a

'one-size-fits-all' approach which fails to encompass the diversity of the population and differing needs of the group.

1.2 Aims of this Research

With the first phase of the research, I aimed to gain an overview of the opinions of home-educators on a range of issues. These questions largely emerged from themes that arose from my literature review. These included, but are not limited to: legislation, factors contributing to the decision to home-educate, community and support groups for home-educators, location and relationships. The questionnaire data is largely quantitative and has been presented in the form of descriptive statistics and frequency tables, with the exception of four questions from a total of thirty-six.

I had the intention of understanding more about the thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education from young people themselves and their parents/carers through the case studies which formed phase two of my research. I am aware that the researcher/participant power imbalance can affect the quality of data collected and that perhaps this power dynamic is more at play in case studies where the relationship between the participants and researcher is key. Therefore, in order to address this, I let the young person lead the conversation. I deliberately use the word conversation, rather than interview, as interview has many formal connotations to it and I aimed to make the young person (and their family) feel as relaxed as possible. In each case, I began with a fairly structured activity to ease the young person in, but after this they directed the conversation, sharing with me as much or as little as they felt comfortable with. I identified themes to guide the young person with the conversation should they be reluctant to talk to me, however, I found that these did not need to be called upon.

I have presented the narratives of families which I have worked with as accurately as possible. With participants over the age of ten years, I have revisited and presented their story to them in order to reduce researcher

bias. However, it would be naive of me to think that this has completely been eliminated. Although I have made every effort to remain objective and keep the young person's voice central, I am aware that my projections may filter through. After sharing the narrative with the young people, I was interested in how the young people perceived the process of talking about their experiences and reading them back.

Findings presented in this study will be of interest to school staff and educational psychologists who are looking to support families who are either considering home-education or in the process of making the transition. My research journey and findings may also be of interest to other researchers who plan to explore themes with this group of home-educators. Although not an aim when I began the research, due to the difficulties that I encountered in accessing this 'hard to reach' group, I have developed a model (summative diagram on page 150) to assist other researchers who may be interested in accessing home-educators, or other 'hard to reach' participant groups.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Overview

This chapter reviews existing literature on the topic of home-education using a variety of resources including: electronic databases, research journals, articles, books and government commissioned reports.

The literature review was completed prior to the design of my study in order to inform my research questions. I have also included an updated literature search in section 2.9, as I am aware that government reports and new information surface frequently; often in response to high profile negative media reports.

2.1 Literature Search Procedure

According to Rothermel (2011) there is an extensive list of British researchers who have explored the area of home-education. In an attempt to access a range of these sources, I used the online academic library SAGE Journals and I used the search terms “home-education” and “UK” in conjunction to generate 96 results. I completed a further search using the terms “home-school” and “UK,” however this produced less relevant results such as the link between home and school environments. Therefore, I amended the search terms to “home-schooling” and “UK.” This generated 142 results. Various combinations of the following terms: “home-education, UK, home-school, alternative setting and home-learning” were used in the Taylor and Francis online platform which yielded over 80,080 results. From these papers, I read a selection of those which were listed as most “relevant and recent” by the search engine. The references from these lead to other papers, authors and journals from which information has been collated to form this review.

2.2 Worldwide Research

My preliminary reading incorporated worldwide research and I soon found that the acceptance of home-education varies across the international landscape (Arora, 2006). For example, in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Greece, school attendance is compulsory and home-education is not allowed by law (Taylor and Petrie, 2000), although some exceptions are made in extenuating circumstances (Blok and Karsten, 2011). Examples of such circumstances, as identified by Blok and Karsten (2011), include children who are ill for long periods, children of parents with professions requiring them to move frequently and children who have arrived in the UK as immigrants but only intend to stay in the country for a short period of time. Other countries, such as Austria, which previously did not allow home-education, now permit it (Taylor and Petrie, 2000). In the UK, as is the case in Canada, the USA and Australia, home-education is considered an alternative form of educational provision and its popularity has, and continues to, grow (Lowe and Thomas, 2002).

Badman's (2009) work which involved looking at England's approach to elective home-education was under the instruction of the British government who wanted claims that 'home education' could be used as a 'cover' for various forms of child abuse, including neglect and sexual exploitation to be investigated (DCSF, 2007). The Badman Review reported that 20% of children were receiving an inadequate education and that home-educated children were twice as likely to be subject to a Child Protection Plan as nationally.

He too considered home-education within an international context and concluded that England is most liberal in its acceptance and regulation. He explains that most European countries require registration of home-educated children and young people, something which is not necessary in the UK. He also recognised the differences in laws and guiding legislation, quoting law from New Zealand which requires that the "person will be taught at least as regularly and as well as in registered school." Badman notes that the majority of other countries also have processes for registration and regular

monitoring of elective home-education, requiring evidence of progress; something which is lacking in the UK.

As there are clearly vast differences in the acceptance and progression of home-education worldwide, I made a conscious decision to narrow my search so as it had a UK based focus.

2.3 Home-Education and Legislation

The 1996 Education Act requires that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.” (Education Act, 1996, p. 7)

Elective home education (EHE) falls into the “otherwise” category. Although, Monk (2004) suggests that “otherwise” could also mean education in hospitals, referral units and also home tuition provided by the local authority (LA). The term “suitable education” is not entirely clear, however, the present case law which reflects the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989, Article 29), stipulates that a suitable education:

“...primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child’s options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so.” (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007)

The vague wording of this legislation is open to interpretation and has resulted in home-educated children being in receipt of a variety of different styles and practices of home-education.

The current legislation puts the child’s ability to live a good life, where they can contribute to their local community, at the forefront and as the central measure of the success of their home-education experience. The critical question is what one’s perception of a good life and successful contribution to society is and,

moreover, the skills, personal qualities, knowledge etc. that are required to pursue it (Davies, 2004).

Currently, parents do not need to inform their LA that they are home-educating their child unless it involves the removal of the child from the school system. Consequently, due to the registration being non-compulsory, there is only an estimation of the number of children who are home-educated within the UK (Morton, 2010). Again, this raises the question regarding what support home-educators can be offered. If a large proportion of the home-educating population is unknown, then how can we ensure that they are suitably provided for?

2.4 The Badman Review

As aforementioned, Graham Badman conducted a review into the arrangements for home-education in England in 2009. He was specifically looking at whether there were any barriers to LAs and other public agencies in effectively carrying out their designated safeguarding responsibilities in relation to home-educated children. In his letter to the Secretary of State for Education, found at the beginning of his report, Badman states that his review also investigates suggestions that home-education could be used as a 'cover' for child abuse.

Badman conducted his research by means of structured interviews with a range of stakeholders including home-educating parents and children, visits to local authorities and home-education groups. Badman also made a public call for evidence to which over two thousand responses were received, more than three quarters of which were from home-educating parents or children. Additionally a questionnaire was sent to all 'top tier local authorities' in England. Ninety responses to the questionnaire were received which equates to a 60% response rate.

Badman reports that the majority of home-educators were "fiercely defensive" of their rights and actions. Some welcomed the visits of local authority officers and support which was offered in a range of ways; including through drop-in centres, resources and materials. Some home-educating families argued for more regular monitoring and intervention, whilst others expressed a preference to have no contact with their LA. Despite this, Badman identified several LAs who

were committed to supporting the home-educating population. For example, North Yorkshire County Council was organising regular 'drop-in' days where home-educating parents and children could meet each other and other professionals from the authority. These professionals were able to discuss queries relating to the child's future direction of education, including routes into college and university. Badman reported that this day also acted as a 'fun day' where interactive sessions were hosted. Significantly, parents and children were asked to complete a questionnaire which was used to shape subsequent 'drop-in' days. This shows that the opinions of home-educating families were being valued and appreciated by the LA, which presumably would strengthen relationships.

In the south-west, Somerset County Council was recognised for their effective and ongoing liaison with the local Connexions service. This service is aimed at all electively home-educated young people aged thirteen to sixteen years and looks to offer appropriate support where required. Badman reports that the County Council worked with the local home-education community and further education establishments in order to secure better access for home-educated young people to both vocational and academic courses. Somerset County Council has also run a number of workshops for home-educating families and has organised a residential experience at a local activity centre for Year 5, 6 and 7 pupils on their elective home-education register.

Whilst Badman identified these local authorities, and a number of others, who demonstrated good practice, he noted that it should not be left to chance. It seems that Badman had found great inconsistencies across LAs and he argues that there should be an agreed level of support and interventions offered by LAs.

With regard to Badman's inquiry into the suggestion that elective home education could be used as a cover for abuse, the majority of parents were outraged. Badman reports that many parents pointed out that most incidents where this had occurred, and the cases involved the highest level of abuse, were against children who were already known to social care, had been withdrawn from school or were below the statutory school age. Many home-educators felt that due to media coverage of tragic cases, they were left needing to prove their innocence. This prompted Badman to raise some

important questions. He asks whether incidents of abuse of children within the home-educating community are disproportionately high relative to the general population. Badman also asks whether a change in regulations with regard to home-education would have prevented or ameliorated such abuse. He progresses to make the point that attendance at school is no guarantee of children's safety. Although, he does accept that attending school does provide the opportunity for the child to make a disclosure about any abuse with a trusted adult and that there are more professional eyes on the child, making it more likely that abuse will be identified. With regards to the disproportionately high levels of abuse, Badman concluded that the number of children known to children's social care in *some* local authorities was disproportionately high in relation to the size of their home-educating population. Children flagged to social care services are typically those who are believed to be in need of additional professional input or where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This could be due to many reasons such as parental substance abuse, neglect or domestic violence. Badman clearly states that he is not suggesting there is a causal link or determining factor between abuse and home-education, more that the figures indicate a need for greater awareness and suitable training for professionals in order for them to fulfil their duties. Badman recommends that professionals who identify even low level concerns regarding parents' ability to provide suitable education should report them, irrespective of whether the child is already known to social care.

This is a highly topical area of public interest which has been documented by the media frequently of late due to several high profile cases. For example, an article in *The Times* entitled, "*Rise in home-schooling raises fear of children drifting off safety radar*" (Woolcock, 2016, *The Times*), claims that "vulnerable" children are falling off the authorities' radar. *The Times* report that their independent investigation shows a 45% increase in home-education in the past five years. They claim that this increase has been fuelled by some children missing out on places at "the best" local schools and because some families are choosing to opt out of the exam based culture that seems embedded in schools. Similarly, the BBC reported in December 2015 that there has been a 65% increase in children recorded as home-educated in the UK over the past six years. Whilst the figures reported in the media must be taken with caution, they

serve to generate interest and intrigue amongst the general population. With regards to the safety of home-educated young people, The Independent reported in December 2015 that these children were allowed to “drop off the radar, where they could be exposed to harm, exploitation or the influence of extremist ideologies.” (McTague, 2015, The Independent) Whilst these reports serve to fuel public interest, they also put the home-educating community in the spotlight for negative reasons. In my opinion, this may have the possible impact of encouraging home-educators to seek solidarity as a group, although as discussed previously, the home-educating demographic is varied in terms of needs, practices, locations and motivations (Monk, 2009) so finding common ground may prove difficult.

Also emerging from Badman’s Review there is the question of what ‘autonomous’ learning (which many home-educating parents claimed was underlying their home-education approach) actually consists of. The parents that participated in Badman’s Review argued that it defies definition and essentially allows children to develop at their own rate, largely through the pursuit of personal interest. Critics may argue that this approach lacks pace, rigour and direction. Historic psychological work, such as Vygotskian theory, suggests that a more knowledgeable peer or adult is needed to scaffold the learning experience. This view is supported by case law emerging from the Harrison and Harrison v Stephenson case (1982), recounted by Taylor (2000), stating that “education” demands at least an element of supervision and in their opinion, allowing a child to follow their own devices is “at best, child-minding.”

Finally, also emerging from Badman’s Review is the issue of outcomes for home-educated children and young people. Badman notes that some studies have found that home-educated children outperformed their school educated counterparts on a range of factors; however, Badman is not convinced that home-education is the main factor in this difference in performance. He argues that socio-economic factors, such as better educated parents with higher incomes may be influential. Research also suggests that as the decision to home-educate often comes as a result of a long deliberation and careful evaluation of options (Arora, 2006) and as such home-educated are far from vulnerable (McIntyre-Bhatty, 2007). McIntyre-Bhatty emphasises that due to

the pain-staking decision making process, parents often have a greater investment in their children's development; including intellectual, psychological and social.

2.5 Home-Education – A Choice or Last Resort?

Badman found that some children who had additional or special needs were not being adequately provided for at school and this had led to some parents withdrawing their children from the school system. Badman describes this as 'home education by default' rather than 'elective home education.'

Rose and Howley (2007) acknowledge that some teachers have exceptional skills in supporting children with special educational needs (SEN), but they also point out that these teachers still, at times, can find these children challenging. The groups of children who are perceived to be the most difficult to manage are those whose behaviour is challenging to their teachers (Evans and Lunt, 2002) and children on the autistic spectrum (Emam and Farrell, 2009). Parsons, Lewis and Ellins (2009) argue that the lack of understanding of autism is what makes it disproportionately difficult for parents of children with autistic spectrum condition (ASC) to find an appropriate provision to support their children adequately.

As mentioned before, parents are not obliged to inform their LA of their decision to home-educate if they are new to the LA or if the child never attended school, therefore the precise number of those who are home-educated and have SEN is unknown. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) reported that in 2004 there were 1070 children with statements, many of which have been converted to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP), were educated outside of school settings. Although statements and EHCPs are similar in that they consider the young person's needs, EHCPs are highly personalised drawing on parents and the views of the young person where appropriate. Furthermore, as the title suggests, EHCPs refer to the young person's needs across education, health and care whereas statements were focused largely on educational needs. Parson and Lewis (2010) also acknowledged that this figure is not an accurate representation of the demographic as these are only the children who the LA are aware of and it only includes children with statements. There may be

children with additional needs who are not in receipt of a statement. Reasons for their decision to home-educate have not been investigated but an interesting statistic from Hopwood, O'Neill, Castro and Hodgson (2007) would suggest that the proportion of home-educated children with statements far outweighs the national figure for school educated children with statements.

In their study, 5% of home-educated children had a statement of SEN compared to a national figure of 2.9% at the time. It is possible that Hopwood et al.'s sample which involved nine LAs had disproportionately high numbers due to location or the establishment of a supportive network of parents with SEN needs, amongst other reasons. Alternatively, their figure may have been representative of the home-educating population as a whole. This would suggest that parents who have children with SEN are more likely to home-educate than parents of children without SEN.

A small-scale study by Kendall and Taylor (2014) found that of the seven home-educating parents of children with SEN that they interviewed, they all felt that they had no other choice but to home-educate their children. They were all in agreement that it was the decline in their children's health and well-being that was the deciding factor. Kendall and Taylor (2014) identified a number of other factors which led to this decision such as the failure of schools to engage with parents, lack of knowledge and expertise around specific conditions and needs and the impact of the school environment on the child. In particular, they found there to be a lack of knowledge around ASC from all members of staff including head teachers. In my opinion, there seems to be a lack of understanding around ASC because it is a spectrum, therefore multiple children can present very differently because they are at different places on the spectrum. Although, as the authors themselves are aware, the sample used was very small and as such the results need to be interpreted with caution.

2.6 Why do parents choose to home-educate?

Rothermel (2003) claims that home-educators often have characteristics such as "eccentric, arrogant, ignorant, middle-class and hippy" associated to them. Monk (2004) claims that home-education is not a problem but it is being 'problematised' due to growing concerns from professionals. He writes, "parents

who choose to home-educate are pathologised; perceived at best as somewhat eccentric or odd and at worst viewed with a degree of suspicion and unease.” (Monk, 2004, pp.27)

Dick Kitto (1990) who was the founder member of the home-education organisation ‘Education Otherwise’ proposed that home-educators fell into one of three categories; ‘competitors,’ ‘rebels’ or ‘compensators.’ Kitto argued that ‘competitors’ were challenging the school system and trying to outdo their school-based counterparts, ‘rebels’ were battling against the constraints of the system and ‘compensators’ were trying to make amends following a problem in school. Blacker (1981), in one of the earliest studies of home-education in the UK, interviewed sixteen home-educating families and explored whether there was any supporting evidence for Kitto’s categorisation system. As a result of the interviews, Blacker concluded that Kitto’s classification was indeed useful and families could be categorised into one of the three categories. In fact, Blacker classified five of her sixteen families as ‘competitors,’ ten as ‘compensators’ and one family as ‘rebels.’ However, as Rothermel argues, Blacker’s acceptance of these categorisations now seems to be far too over simplistic as the growth in home-education has been due to more complex motives. Whilst these categories may have once been sufficient, there are now many more reasons that parents choose to home-educate. Rothermel even suggests that perhaps the current home-educating population in the UK is too diverse to neatly categorise.

Mayberry (1989) discussed her findings from her 1988 study in the USA which involved 461 home-educating families. In contrast to Blacker (1981), Mayberry suggested that home-educators fell into one of four categories; religious, academically motivated, social-relational and New Age. She described the religious group as being motivated by religious beliefs and values; academically motivated parents were those that felt they could outperform schools; social-relational parents were of the belief that their children would be better both developmentally and socially at home; and New-Age parents were following an alternative lifestyle.

Van Galen (1991) also explored the ways in which home-educators in the USA could be categorised. She divided home-educators into two broader categories, ‘ideologues’ and ‘pedagogues.’ Van Galen explained that ‘ideologues’ were

those who object to what is being taught at school and they also seek to improve intra family relationships. According to Van Galen, this demographic also hold traditional and conservative views. More specifically, they follow the philosophy of Christian fundamentalism. Van Galen argues that the reasons the 'Ideologues' initially turn to home-education is in order to find an alternative to school and this could be for a number of reasons including difficulties in school, disagreement over the content of the curriculum or for health reasons. Van Galen suggests that over time, as these home-educators network with other home-educating families, their reasons shift. She proposes that these home-educators become more radical as they begin to share a philosophy. This philosophy unites them as they feel they are following God's will in accepting the responsibility to care for and educate their children. Van Galen states that some home-educating 'pedagogues' may have similar reasons for their choices as 'ideologues,' although the main difference seems to be that 'pedagogues' are 'claiming' a right to educate their children in a unique way, whereas 'ideologues' are 'accepting' it.

Lowden (1993) also used this two category system to group twenty-two home-educating families in the UK, although he rejected the Christian element as he felt that this was not so relevant in the UK. Lowden also considered Kitto's three classifications and supported their existence, however he thought that families were more transient, rather than confined to one of these categories.

Apostoleris (2002) discussed the categories of 'ideologue' and 'pedagogue,' commenting that although there was some overlap between the two, it was still a useful way of distinguishing those who were dissatisfied with the 'content' of schooling and those who were dissatisfied with the 'method.' As commented on regarding Blacker's work, this too seems like an over-simplistic classification.

Monk (2009) also raises concerns regarding this binary categorisation claiming that it overlooks parents who only home-educate for a short period and groups such as travellers who are often not classed as 'home-educators' at all.

Similarly to Van Galen, Monk criticises the categorisation of home-educators in this way as he argues it fails to capture the multiple motives parents may have for choosing this type of education and the failure to recognise the change in these motives over time.

Morton (2010) identified three specific groups of home-educators. The third group were those who viewed home-education as a 'last resort' and this was often due to bullying occurring at school towards a child who may or may not have special educational needs. Studies by Parsons and Lewis (2010), Arora (2006), Hopwood et al. (2007) and Gibson and Kendall (2010) all identify similar themes of settings failing to meet the needs, both educational and otherwise, of children who have additional needs or disabilities.

Rothermel (2003), in my opinion, summarises the situation well by writing that home-educators are not a homogenous group. However, she notes that they often seek solidarity and harmony by meeting and exchanging ideas. Rothermel then claims that one common characteristic of home-educators is the fact that they have chosen to home-educate and thus question the norm, as such, she believes that this group then begin to question other societal expectations. This is a view which is echoed by Badman (2009) who argues that attempts to regard home-educators as a homogenous group would "simply be wrong." (p.10) He states that there are approximately 20,000 home-educated children and young people known to local authorities, although estimates put the actual figure in excess of 80,000. Given this large number of children, there is understandably a considerable degree of individualism and whilst this is arguably a strength of the community, as Badman states, it is also a source of tension that prevents a representative opinion being discovered.

Rothermel's more recent work supports the view that home-educators are a diverse group encompassing a range of families and practices. For example, Roma families, religious home-educators and those who engage private tutors. Rothermel (2011) comments that as well as there being no single type of home-educator, there is also no single reason why families choose to home-educate. Despite this, she states that there does seem to be one commonality; the "mothers were often the parent most involved with the day to day running of the children's education." (pg. 25)

As Lowden identified, families can be transient and their reasons for home-educating can change and develop over time. Also, categorising a family in this way assumes that both parents are in agreement. Whilst parents may reach a joint decision to home-educate, they may be doing so for two different reasons which does not seem to be accommodated for in this simple grouping system.

Furthermore, there might be families who choose to home-educate due to dissatisfaction around both the content and method. Therefore, it seems unhelpful and perhaps disrespectful to dilute what might be a complex situation and decision into something that fits neatly into a category.

2.7 Socialisation

In many of the papers that I have read, a recurring criticism is the lack of opportunity for socialisation. Giddens (2006) describes the socialisation process as the development of an infant's self-awareness and their knowledge.

Durkheim (1956) claimed that education is a way of guaranteeing that young citizens have opportunity to share ideas, develop solidarity and become socially integrated.

However, research by Shyers (1992) found that home-educated students received significantly lower problem behaviour scores than children who attended school. He also found that home-educated children are better socially adjusted than children who attend school. Shyers concluded that instead of questioning the social development of home-educated children, the poor social adjustment of school attendees should be considered. A separate study by Smedley (1992) used different test instruments but still reached the same conclusion that home-educated children are better socialised than those attending school. Smedley's research concluded that reasons for this difference in socialisation were due to the classroom being a mostly one-way communication system with very few meaningful interchanges.

Findings indicated that the opposite was the case for home-based education. Another conclusion was that home-based education works towards a more personalised goals and aspirations whereas school based education is much more generic, catering for the masses. Smedley felt that the age segregation which is experienced in school is unnatural and it does not prepare individuals well for the real world where they will need to interact with people of varying ages. In contrast, it was found that home-education better mirrors the interactions that will be experienced in later life with regular contact with older and younger members of society. Interestingly, Honeybone (2000) and Jackson

(2009) found that one of the key things valued by home-educators was the fact that children were encouraged to mix with people of all ages.

Finally, Smedley also considered the self-directed learning that occurs in the home-education environment contributes to building confidence and assists in developing people who are able to adapt to different situations. This is a skill which seemed to be missing in school based learners. Whilst Smedley makes valid points, these concluding assumptions must be viewed in context.

Smedley's research took place in 1992 and since then there have been many changes to the curriculum and the general schooling experience.

Many other studies also found that the social skills of home-educated learners were better than those of their school based counterparts. For example, Thomas (1998) studied over one hundred home-educating families in Australia and the UK, finding that the children were not socially disadvantaged. Arora (2002) also claims that research generally indicates home-educated children are more well-adjusted (Shyers, 1992), have a higher self-esteem (Scheffer, 1995), are more confident and achieve more highly (Ray, 1991; Webb, 1990) than their counterparts who attend school. Arora considers these to be unsurprising findings when parental backgrounds are taken into account. Surveys in the UK and USA suggest that the parents have, on average, greater formal education and a higher family income than average. These parents tend to live in two-parent families and are highly motivated for their children to succeed (Mayberry et al, 1995). Many of them (25-50%) are teachers or teacher trained (Meighan, 1997). Arora (2002) states that these factors are frequently correlated with high achievement.

Personally, I think this data should be interpreted cautiously, as previously discussed the motivations, beliefs and styles of home-education vary. To consider the home-educating population as a homogenous group of well-educated, two-parent families would be naive. Referring to Meighan's (1997) figure of 25-50% of home-educators being teachers or teacher trained means that there are 50-75% of home-educators who do not have this training. Furthermore, reinforcing the earlier point, the large majority of participants in these studies involve families who inform their LA of their decision to home-educate. This is not an obligation. As such, the home-educated population may

be misrepresented in research as there is a proportion of unknown families who may belong to a different socioeconomic group.

Finally, John Barratt-Peacock (2003) raises an important question in relation to relying on schooling to develop social skills. He argues that home-education is a tradition that pre-dates schooling which suggests that if schooling is the only way to develop social skills, children would have historically encountered difficulties developing social skills before schools became an integral part of society.

2.8 Prevalence of Home-Education

The prevalence of home-education is difficult to ascertain due to the non-regulated nature of this group of people. If a child has never been on the roll of a school in a LA because he/she was pre-school or had moved in from another LA then the parents are not obliged to inform anyone. This makes it difficult for LAs to have precise figures for their home-educating population. For example, Rothermel (2002) found that more than 30% of the 419 families who took part in her survey were not on their LA list.

Various studies have attempted to gain more accurate figures. For example, Bates (1996) examined LA lists and counted 3,602 families who home-educated 4,768 children nationwide. In 1997, Meighan suggested that the number was approaching 50,000 and more recent estimates vary. The Home Education Organisation UK suggests that in 2015 there were around 80,000 children being home-educated, which is approximately 0.6% of compulsory school aged children.

In the UK, there are no reliable data on the number of children educated at home. Available statistics are inconsistent and there is no officially recognised source. Despite this there is anecdotal evidence that home education is on the increase. In 1999 the Department for Education and Skills produced a document entitled “The Prevalence of Home Education in England: A Feasibility Study.” This documented a study involving nine LAs which were intentionally selected to provide an overview of a variety of different demographics across the UK. For example, a mixture of urban and rural LAs were involved. Additionally, three LAs were selected on the basis of having home-educated

young people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. The numbers of home-educated children that were known to LAs varied. The total number of home-educated children known to the sample of nine LAs was 1,245. This ranged from 0.09% to 0.42% of the total school population of the areas involved.

It was found that the transition from primary to secondary school marks a point at which the home-educating numbers rise as there is a far greater proportion of children being home-educated at the secondary phase of education than at primary. Generally, the gender distribution of home-educated pupils was even and the majority of home-educated children in this particular sample were classified as being White British. At the time of the study, statements of special educational needs (SEN) were issued rather than Education Health and Care Plans. Of those sampled, five percent had a statement of SEN compared to the national figure at the time of 2.9%.

The study also noted that parents elected to home-educate their children for a variety, and indeed, a combination of reasons. These reasons sometimes changed over time or were interlinked. It is documented that the most common reasons for home-educating, according to parents, LAs and home-education organisations, included: dissatisfaction with school discipline and safety; dissatisfaction with the quality of education and/or the curriculum offered; religious and/or cultural beliefs; risk of exclusion; and special educational needs not being adequately met.

The rapid rise in numbers of families choosing to home-educate and apparent lack of clarity over this somewhat 'hidden' population has led to concerns regarding child protection (Arora, 2006). This is because disclosures to staff in school can be the first step that children take. In July 2016, an independent report, known as a Child Practice Review, into the death of a home-educated child who was unknown to the authorities was published (it is publicly available on the Pembrokeshire County Council's website). The purpose of such reviews is to identify areas of learning for future practice. As such, it involves groups of professionals critically exploring the detail and context within which agencies perform their duties and responsibilities. The child involved lived in a remote community in Pembrokeshire with his parents and older sibling. He died in 2011, aged just eight.

One of the recommendations from the report was that the Welsh government changes the law and enforces a compulsory register for elective home-educating children. Furthermore, that these families are visited annually, conversations had and a record of these visits kept. To date, the recommendation of a compulsory register is not yet in place.

Alongside the Child Practice Review, home-education has been the focus of a number of media articles. A harshly worded comment in the TES categorised home-educating families, rather unfairly claiming that “home-educators fall into three camps: abusers hiding their children away; nutters embracing an alternative lifestyle; and (occasionally) the wealthy middle-classes who can afford for one of the parents not to work and do the education instead.” (Bernard Trafford, 2016, The TES) Given such negative publicity, it is perhaps unsurprising that some families are reluctant to register themselves with their LA. It might be that they are fearful about the scrutiny that they will come under and worried about how they will be viewed by the wider society.

2.9 Summary

In summary, the international landscape surrounding home-education is varied with some countries completely banning home-education and others, like England, allowing it to develop. Whilst there is no complete database in the UK, due to there not being a requirement to register as a home-educated child, speculative figures show a rise in the numbers of families opting to home-educate.

One of the greatest problems in conducting research in this area is to obtain a representative sample of home educating families. Many of the studies that I have quoted are affected by this. Typically, data have been gathered through postal questionnaires, with low response rates, or from families who volunteered to be interviewed. The respondents are therefore likely to be the more highly motivated and possibly the better educated of the entire group of home-educating parents, and their children are likely to benefit from such advantages. However, this criticism is not isolated to home-education research and is an issue faced by researchers of a multitude of topics.

Another difficulty seems to be in identifying common characteristics of home-educating families, which in turn creates problems in ensuring the LA is providing a service which is supportive and helpful. Research suggests that the home-educating population is not a homogenous group and therefore providing a service for such a diverse demographic can be difficult. Furthermore, research by Badman highlighted the inconsistencies across LAs in their provision for home-educating families. He identified areas where good practice was occurring but this was not the case everywhere.

Given that the Badman Review was in 2009, I am interested in gaining a more current understanding of the home-educating landscape regarding the topics which have arisen through my reading; including, prevalence, reasons for opting for home-education and the effects of legislation.

As the research quite clearly shows that the home-educated population is not a homogenous group, I am interested in immersing myself in the stories of individual families. I do not intend for the data to be generalised but it will provide an insight into specific families and provide a better understanding of how they deal with issues such as socialisation and legislative demands which might be helpful to practitioners, including educational psychologists, who work with this demographic, policy makers, those who are considering home-education and those supporting families in the process of making the decision.

2.9.1. Updated Literature Search

This literature review was completed prior to the completion of the design of my study and data collection. Wanting to ensure that I am well-informed and my knowledge of the home-education landscape at a national level is current, I conducted a literature search in May 2017. I used the same process and search terms as before, which are outlined in section 2.1, with the addition of a date filter. I filtered articles published from 2016 to present.

In my opinion, the most poignant and relevant update being a briefing paper from the House of Commons which was released in January 2017 (Foster, 2017). This paper outlined the rights and responsibilities of parents as well as the expectations of the LA. The briefing paper seemed to have been triggered, in part, by what has become known as the 'Casey Review' (2016). This review

was conducted by Dame Louise Casey in December 2016 and focused on opportunity and integration with a section specifically focusing on home-education. Whilst the Casey Review supported parental rights to be able to home-educate their children, it also raised a number of associated difficulties and risk. These included concerns around the definition of a “suitable education” which Casey claimed counters efforts to foster British values in schools and build cohesive communities. Other concerns were around the issue of parents abusing their right to home-educate in order to place their children in unregistered schools. Finally, Casey shared her worries around LAs not knowing enough about the standard or suitability of education being provided in the home and, a continued fear that with LAs not having extensive access to this demographic the greater the opportunity for child protection issues to go unnoticed.

Casey’s concerns are not something that are entirely new. Badman had already raised the issue of inconsistent practice amongst LAs and the risk of people using home-education as a way of evading and masking any child protection issues. Badman recommended that a compulsory registration scheme for home-educators was introduced so that the authority could better monitor this demographic, or in the very least, be aware of the number of home-educators. Despite this proposal being included in the Children Schools and Families Bill (2009-2010), the provisions were later dropped from the bill during its passage through Parliament.

My final comments on the updated literature are on the topic of “flexi-schooling.” According to the House of Commons briefing paper, this refers to an approach in which children have a combined programme of part-time attendance at school and part-time home-education. The notion of flexi-schooling has been met with opposition in the political arena and it was not until March 2013 that the following advice was issued, “where parents have entered in to flexi-schooling arrangements, schools may continue to offer those arrangements.” Clearly, the wording of continue suggests that only those that have already embarked on this educational arrangement should do so and it was discouraging of families adopting this approach if they had not yet done so. However, the Department for Education’s non-statutory guidance on school attendance was last updated in November 2016 and this states that schools

cannot place pupils on part-time timetables but it does acknowledge that “in exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil’s individual needs.”

Flexi-schooling straddles both options for education and I understand why the guidance states that it should only be available in exceptional circumstances. If everyone was allowed this privilege then I assume that more families, who were in a financial position to do so, would opt for this and professionals would be no clearer on whether they were providing a “suitable” education for their children at home. I offer that for families who do not have a strong philosophical stance and who are only removing their children from school as a last resort could temporarily put their children on a part-time timetable until differences were resolved which would avoid the need for them to totally disengage from the school system. For those families who are strongly opposed to schooling arrangements such as discreet subjects and same age classes, clearly flexi-schooling would not be an option.

My literature update shows that new information is frequently being collated and produced. Although there appears to be little movement on key issues, such as compulsory registration of home-educated young people, it is topical and continues to be discussed. The discussions are largely around the politics of home-education and there is little thorough academic research to inform decisions, which is perhaps why there is a reluctance to implement new ideas and reform the national approach to the registering and monitoring of home-educators.

2.9.2 Research Questions

There were some clear themes that emerged from my literature review as identified by the subheadings; some of which I think could be explored further. Such as the main factors for parents choosing to home-educate currently. Whilst the literature indicates that there is no single reason why parents and carers may choose home-education, I am interested to see if there are some factors significantly more influential than others. Additionally, there are some significant gaps in the literature, the biggest of these being the views of the

young people being home-educated. This has led to the formulation of the following research questions:

1. What are the main factors for parents choosing to home-educate?
2. What aspirations do home-educators have for their children?
3. What impact does legislation have on home-education practice?
4. What are the thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education for young people?
5. What are the thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education for parents?
6. How did the young people perceive the process of talking about, and reading back, their experiences?
7. How did the young people describe the process of being listened to?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0 Overview

This research took the form of a two-phase mixed methods study and is a sequential explanatory design (Kroll and Neri, 2009). Kroll and Neri (2009) describe a sequential explanatory design as typically having a quantitative phase first which is followed by a second phase of qualitative data collection. The findings from the second phase are used to expand on, explore further and contextualise data collected in the first phase. I include *Figure 1* below as a visual representation of the research design.

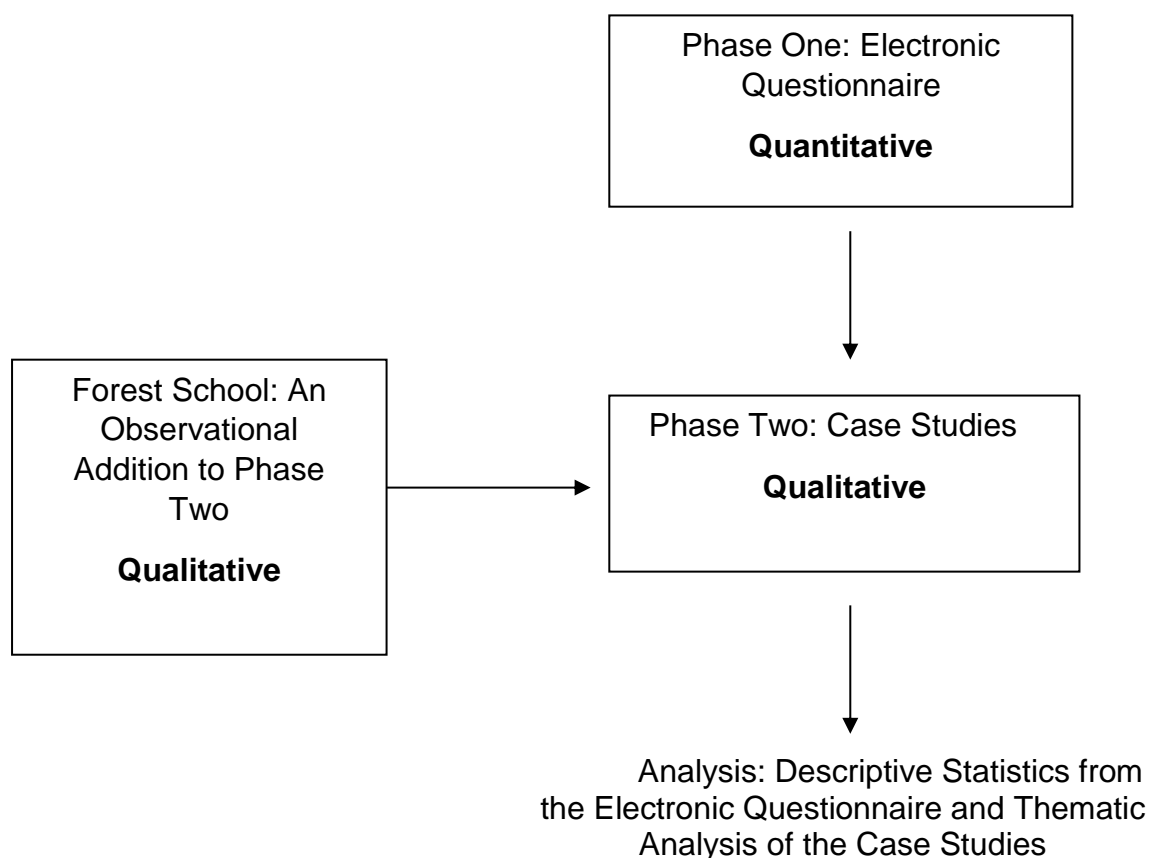
Phase One involved an electronic questionnaire which, to begin with, was circulated within a region in the south-west of England. However, these restrictions were then lifted and the questionnaire was open for anyone within England to participate. The aim was to explore the themes that had arisen from the literature review and how these were impacting on home-educators now, given that some of the literature was several years old. For example, home-educators' reasons for home-educating, where the majority of education takes place, how legislation impacts on day to day practice and who provides the education. Rothermel (2003) and Badman (2009) both concluded that home-educators are not a homogenous group. As this research was somewhat dated, I wanted to explore if this was still a relevant assumption. (See section 3.5.2 for further information on the questionnaire construction.)

Phase Two involved case studies of five families in England. I audio recorded the work I did with the young people and parents, where I felt it appropriate, and transcribed this information. I revisited families who had children aged ten years or over, and used this opportunity to check that I had accurately understood their story and situation. I chose to revisit children based upon age as I used Hart's (2013) guide to children's ability to participate as a guide. According to the chart, children aged approximately between the ages of four and nine years old fall into the "level one" category. Within this level children can recognise a difference of perspectives but, significantly, they do not necessarily have the ability to be self-reflective or

an awareness of how others might view one's thoughts and feelings. Therefore, a second visit where I would be expecting the children to reflect on information they had previously shared seemed to be tokenistic rather than adding any substantial value, as I thought it might with those aged over ten years.

As I encountered difficulties in recruiting participants, I attended a Forest School on a day specifically for home-educating children. I had an opportunity to speak to some home-educating parents whilst participating in the Forest School activities. I did not want to discard any of this data as I felt it was valuable; therefore, I also transcribed and analysed these less formal conversations. This formed an unplanned observational addition to my research.

Figure 1: Research Design



3.1 Epistemological Stance

When beginning my research proposal, my initial consideration was that of my epistemological stance. Epistemology can be described as a set of assumptions about reality and what constitutes truth (McGhee, 2001). It is my belief that there are multiple realities which are based on personal and individual beliefs and constructs, rather than there being a truth existing externally to the individual. I think that these highly personal realities are not constructed by the individual in isolation but are influenced by society, consciousness and experience. This stance, Stake and Kerr (1995, p.99) states, assumes that “knowledge is constructed rather than discovered.”

As researchers, we too have our own constructions of the world and our understandings are inseparable from our way of working. We do not engage in the research process behind a screen, we actively listen and, however much we try not to, evaluate participants’ perspectives against our own. Ultimately, the aim of this type of research is not to discover a “truth” or “correct answer” because by the very nature of constructivism, there are multiple truths. Instead, I aim to generate further interest, share the stories of those that I have worked with and create an ongoing dialogue around home-education which I hope other researchers and professionals will want to engage in.

3.2 Ontology

According to Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013), a narrative ontology “implies that experiences are continuously interactive, resulting in changes in both people and the contexts in which they interact.” These experiences are composed and re-composed as individuals are exposed to other individuals and their storied lives. Clandinin, Huber and Murphy (2011) suggest that it is through story that people assign meaning to their experiences, make sense of their experiences and share them with others.

Caine et al. (2013) refer to an “ontological commitment” where researchers negotiate their entry or access to participants’ lives, figure out how best to

work alongside the participants and collectively decide how best to proceed with the research as the inquiry unfolds. This notion resonates strongly with me and underpins the work in the second phase of the study. I feel a sense of responsibility and duty to accurately share the stories of participants who gave up their time and allowed me to have a window into their lives.

3.3 Psychological Underpinning

Given that I have taken a constructivist approach, it seemed fitting that I should then adopt a personal construct psychology (PCP) based methodology to go alongside my narrative work. Constructivism suggests that there is no reality to be found, instead we have views about the world and it is our ideas that determine what we know. Essentially, each person's constructs about the world are slightly different dependent on their experiences (Speed, 1991). Constructivism focuses on the agency of the individual in creating their phenomenological world, whereas constructionism emphasises the social context (Burr, 2008). Gergen (2003) explains that constructionist ideas favour relationships over the individual minds, collaborative thinking over the individual's thoughts and "dialogue over monologue" (page 158). I took a constructivist approach because I wanted to focus on the individual, their constructs, and ideas. The assumption that is central to PCP is that "all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement." (Kelly, 1955, p.15) This refers to the fact that every belief we have about the world can change when we are faced with a better, more fitting, alternative.

Kelly argued that we are all scientists and we search for repeated themes in our individual experiences of the world. We then use these themes and experiences to make hypotheses, test them out and, if necessary, revise them dependent on our findings.

As such, I used methods appropriate to ascertain the personal constructs of the participants I worked with. Methods for doing so involved actively listening to what they had to say. Through the narrative inquiry, which is explored in more detail, I had the opportunity to present the key points of the story to participants and validate whether I had understood their views. They

were then able to confirm it was correct or advise me to alter sections if they were inaccurate. I also used visual arts based tools as a vehicle for discussion but in some instances they were quite telling. For example, in some cases I asked the young people to construct their 'ideal learning environment' (an adaptation of Heather Moran's (2001) 'Ideal Self' PCP activity). This then allowed me to speculate on what the young person considered important and valuable to their learning experience.

3.4 Narrative Inquiry

According to Patton (2002), qualitative data can take many forms. These include in depth descriptions of circumstances, people, interactions, observed behaviours, events, attitudes, thoughts and beliefs and even direct quotes from people who have historically experienced or who are currently experiencing the particular phenomenon being researched. Patton (2002) notes that whilst qualitative data usually takes the form of text, typically interview transcriptions or organisational documents, it may also include non-textual data such as tables, pictures, audio and video recordings.

Narrative inquirers adopt a different approach to their practice and rather than just solely relying on a research text such as a transcript which is analysed and quoted from; narrative inquiry aims to reach deeper than this. As Riessman (2008) states, "stories do not fall from the sky" (p. 105), nor can they merely be plucked from a research transcript. Stories are at the forefront of the experience. Clandinin et al. (2011) argue that field texts are themselves a story and co-composition of lives. They claim that just having a transcript will not suffice for describing, evoking and best representing the experience. Therefore, my field texts, although on the surface just notes that were made both during and after my meetings with the families involved in the case studies, are actually crucial pieces of data that provide prompts and add the details that make the stories come to life. They detail information about my experience and the worlds that I have been so fortunate to be given an insight into. The following quote from Bruner (2002), to me summarises the power of story-telling well:

“Telling stories is an astonishing thing. We are a species whose main purpose is to tell each other about the expected and the surprises that upset the expected, and we do that through the stories we tell.”

(Bruner, 2002, p. 8)

Bruner’s quote highlights how natural the story-processing is meaning that the process is much more organic than a formal interview may be.

3.5 Phase One

3.5.1 Sample Population

My practical placement for my educational psychology training for both year two and three took place in a local authority that has a high rate of home-educated young people; in fact, as of 2014, there were 526 home-educated children known to the local authority in Devon, 407 in Cornwall and 113 in Torbay (accessed via the EdYourself website). Therefore I naively assumed it would be fairly easy to recruit participants using the local authority database. Figures taken from LA data (accessed via the EdYourself website) list the authorities with the highest recorded number of young people educated outside of school as of 2014 as being Kent (1433 cases), Surrey (711 cases), Essex (679 cases) and Norfolk (633 cases). These figures refer to young people who are accessing any form of education taking place outside of the formal school environment and is not exclusive to home-education. Phase one relied on the participation of home-educators, so parents, carers and tutors. In order to target a wide participant sample, I had planned to send out an electronic questionnaire with the intention that this would highlight areas of discrepancy or themes which would then benefit from further exploration in focus groups.

Unfortunately, due to the Elective Home-Educating Officer falling ill and then retiring, followed by his replacement being on long-term sick leave, it proved near impossible to gain access to the local authority’s database. I was unable to access this myself and send the electronic questionnaire directly, due to it being unethical for me to have access to confidential details.

Therefore, I was reliant on it being sent out by a third party. Despite many phone calls, visits and emails, nothing materialised. However, I had also planned to access groups via social media. As such I contacted a range of home-educating groups on Facebook. A list of which can be found below:

- Christian Home-Educators
- Bristol Home-Education
- Bath Home-Education
- Home-Education Bath and NE Somerset
- Bristol Muslim Home-Educators
- Cornwall Home-Educators
- Mid Cornwall Home-Educators
- Home-Educators UK
- Cornish Christian Home-Educators

I also shared the hyperlink to the questionnaire on Twitter. This yielded some responses but I was still dissatisfied with the response rate. Until this point, I had made a decision to keep the data gathering to a specific area of the south-west in order to better inform that specific local authority. However, I felt that broadening my geographical spread of respondents would add greater depth and provide me with a more holistic view of the home-educating community. The questionnaire was then shared through further social media groups and by word of mouth. I designed posters with the hyperlink to the questionnaire on them and, with permission, put them up in libraries and shops in the south-west and south-east of England to attract further interest.

3.5.2 The Questionnaire Design Process

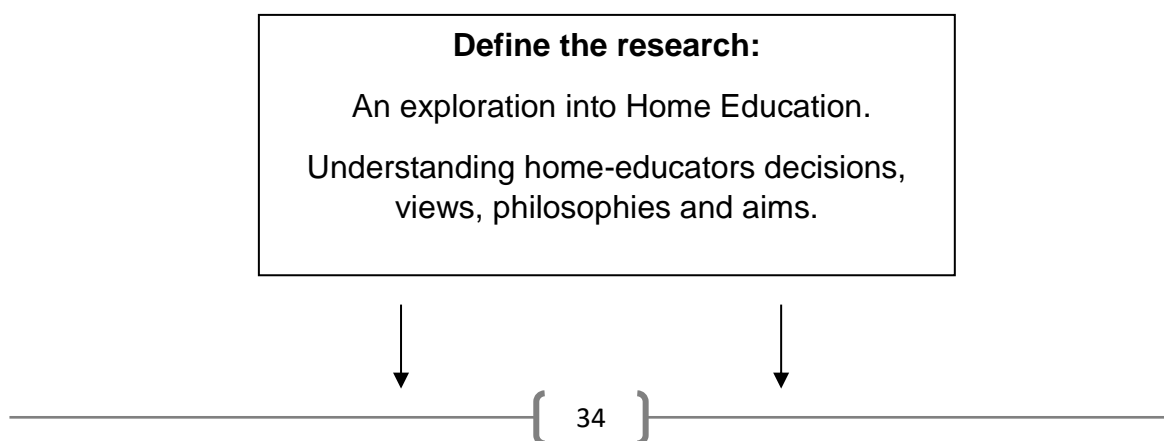
I found Lumsden's (2007) model for designing a questionnaire to be helpful and have included this step process along with details specific to my research. Throughout the research process, visual representations, including flow charts, were particularly useful for me to see how things fitted together and it is for those reasons that I include *Figure 2*.

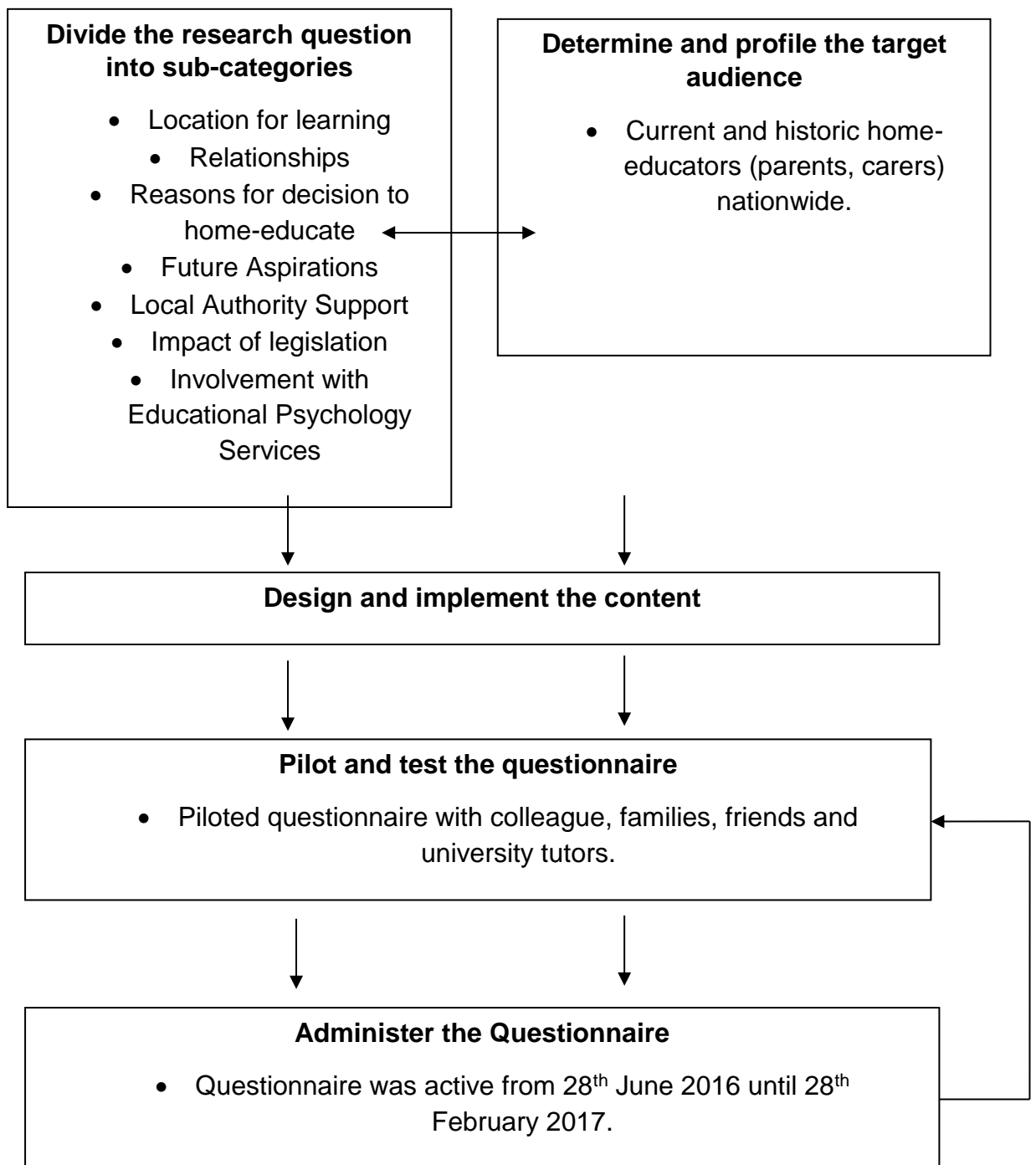
I used my Literature Review as a basis to design the questions for my questionnaire. Emerging from the Literature Review were eight sub-sections

(refer to *Figure 2*) which I wanted to explore in relation to the specific region in which I was working. From these topics, I then made a rough list of questions. I then refined my working questions particularly the phrasing of them to ensure that they clearly asked what I wanted them to and I ensured they were relevant to my research questions. The next step was to develop the response format. I considered which questions would be best suited to a ranking response, which should be closed and which should be open-ended to collect comments. For example, the Literature Review indicated that there were three or four primary reasons why someone might choose to home-educate. Using these reasons, I created a ranking list to see how influential those factors were on parents/carers' decisions to home-educate. The topics for the questions emerged from the Literature Review. Often multiple questions were asked regarding the same topic, so I adopted the "funnel sequence" (Ross, 2005). This format refers to asking questions requiring a more broad response followed by questions with a narrower scope. Once the questions had been designed, these were piloted with colleagues, family, friends and university tutors.

I used Ross' (2005) UNESCO guide as a general reference point for my questionnaire, ensuring that non-sensitive demographic questions were asked first as these are generally easy to answer and non-threatening. Questions relating to the same topic were grouped together for continuity and more sensitive items asked at the end of the topic. For example, I asked about the availability of local initiatives but did not ask which LA participants belonged to until the end of the topic. Additionally, questions which were of a sensitive nature and had the potential to provoke annoyance were made optional so participants had the choice to leave them blank.

Figure 2: Questionnaire Construction





3.6 Phase Two

3.6.1 Sample Population

Initially, I had planned that upon completion of the questionnaire, people who were interested in participating further in the research by volunteering to be

part of the case study and/or focus group element of the research could leave their contact details. Thus, I would have used a serial sampling strategy. As of January 2017, 28 respondents provided their name and email address or phone number. Originally, when I had designed the study, I had planned to facilitate focus groups where topics emerging from the questionnaires could be discussed in further depth. However, as the questionnaire had a greater geographical spread, finding a location and time which was convenient for all 28 respondents who expressed an interest was proving difficult. In an attempt to problem solve around this situation, I explored the possibility of creating an online forum where participants could discuss the issues, responding at a time that was convenient for them and also eliminating the need to be in a specific location.

Contacting groups in order to recruit participants was entirely unsuccessful. I noticed a pattern that some people would volunteer but would later inform me that they were too busy. This was a hugely frustrating part of my research.

Having attempted to recruit participants remotely but with no success, I realised that I needed to change my approach. I thought that people may be more inclined to participate in the research if they knew more about the person behind the research. I considered that a more personal touch might be helpful in the recruitment process. Therefore, I approached local home-education groups but even these were closely guarded and not open to having a researcher attend the group. I adjusted my messages and made the process sound extremely informal, stating that I was open to having a chat over coffee. However, this too was not welcomed. My first break through came via a link at the university. This individual understood the requirements of the university so was aware of the ethical clearance process I had undergone and was a home-educator. I soon found that having contacts was the only way that I was going to gain access to this demographic. Having read the literature and being aware of the way the media sometimes portrayed home-educators, I understood why they may be wary of speaking to me.

I had publicised the study by putting posters up in places where home-educators might be likely to meet, such as libraries, museums, shops and

public spaces. Unfortunately, this too, had no impact. When the university contact expressed an interest in the project, I met with him to explain more about the process and give him further details. This then led to him agreeing to fully participate and we arranged a session when his daughter could also attend. Through this, I then developed a snowball sample, as I was put in contact with another family who were happy to participate. Through this contact, I then gained access to a group where I was able to speak to two more mothers (their children were too young to participate).

I then tried to think creatively about how else I might recruit participants and was aware that if they were people I had shared contacts with, they were likely to be more trusting of me. Therefore, I spread the message around my friends and family. My mother works in a school in Essex, so she mentioned my research to colleagues and provided me with two links which I followed up, one of which did participate in the case studies. I also had established links with the Essex Youth Offending Service so contacted the Education, Training and Employment Manager of this service who was able to spread the word that way. Additionally, my father who works in the Youth Sector in Essex was able to provide me with contact details of two home-educators who also agreed to participate.

As such, my research involves an emergent, opportunistic sample, as the sampling strategy I had evolved over time and was a result of ongoing reflections. I am aware that this sample is only representative of the views of a select few families, however, as discussed in the Literature Review, there is no typical home-educator and it is very difficult to categorise them. Therefore, in my opinion, it is important to view each family's story individually and whilst some comparisons may be drawn, the value is in each family's separate tale.

Patton (1990) indicates that qualitative research is typically emergent in so far as new samples emerge once the fieldwork has begun. Patton continues to argue that being open to wherever the initial contact comes from and where this could take you is a primary strength of qualitative research. I acknowledge that this may also be considered a weakness too as it can appear haphazard and lacking organisation. My sampling approach for the case studies is best described as a snowball sample. I identified one subject

who in turn was able to contact others in the population. Eland-Goossensen, van de Goor, Vollemans, Hendriks and Garretsen (1997) suggest that this technique is useful for research into “hidden populations” where there are difficulties in locating, gaining access to or recruiting participants. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), rather than considering snowball sampling a haphazard approach, argue that it requires the researcher to be actively involved in the initiation of the relationship with the participant, as well as in developing and controlling the snowball sample, the progress and termination of this relationship.

3.6.2 Case Studies

Defining what a case study is can be in itself problematic as there are a range of definitions and varying approaches. Yin (2002) defines cases as “a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context.” (p.13) Yin’s work advocates his beliefs that case studies are a legitimate research tool which inquire into a specific phenomenon in a detailed way which other methodologies such as experiments and surveys fail to.

Whilst I agree with Yin’s ideas regarding what a case study is, his epistemological stance is very different to mine. As outlined, I consider myself to have a constructivist epistemological stance whereas Yin demonstrates positivist thinking. Yin, as far as I am aware, never explicitly references his stance as being a positivist one; however, his descriptions regarding the way he would approach research and more specifically, case studies, would indicate this. My opinion is echoed in Yazan’s (2015) paper, which discusses Yin’s emphasis of maximising “construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.”

In my opinion, Yin makes points which are worthy of consideration, particularly if case studies are to be thought of as a credible, trustworthy method of data collection. Yazan (2015) is rather critical of using these “four yardsticks” and, whilst I think it is not necessarily as natural to use these measures as one might with quantitative research, it is important to keep

them in mind. For example, to improve the internal validity of each case, I revisited the families where the young people were aged ten or over, in order to show them the poem that I had created using quotations from their transcripts. Despite my efforts to improve validity, a large part of my research journey has been about acknowledging my own constructions and considering how these have shifted throughout the process. Meaning making, and indeed narrative inquiry, cannot be done in a vacuum. As much as I have tried to ensure each case study accurately reflects the story told by the family, the story has come through me and therefore will undoubtedly have my interpretation woven into the narrative fabric. Merriam (1988, p.22) also shares this opinion, stating that,

“The researcher brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people’s constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the researcher of other’s views filtered through his or her own.”

Although there is a general agreement regarding what a case study is, there are many different types of case study, as have been identified by Yin (1994). These include holistic, embedded, single case and multiple cases. For the purposes of my research, I chose to conduct holistic case studies which are fundamentally qualitative; relying on narrative and phenomenological descriptions. As Stake (1976, p. 8) explains, themes and hypotheses are important but they are secondary to the understanding of the case.

Golafshani (2003) argues that reliability and validity are terms which are rooted in quantitative research. Quantitative research aims to identify a specific quantifiable effects whereas qualitative research aims to explore and illuminate. Golafshani (2003) suggests that instead of using the terms reliability and validity, words such as trustworthiness, credibility and transferability are better suited. Given information that emerged in the Literature Review, namely Rothermel (2003) and Badman (2009) who conclude that home-educators are not a homogenous group; I consider transferability to be less important in this particular study, however, trustworthiness and credibility were very much a part. To improve

trustworthiness, I used strategies such as member checking to ensure that the information I had best represented the individual's situation. More specifically, I revisited families and presented them with quotes from the transcript arranged in an I poem (discussed in Section 3.6.6). Participants were asked to read through the extracts and remove or alter statements if they thought they were misleading or not a true reflection of their situation.

The case studies I conducted are considered as 'descriptive case studies' as I used the model of narrative inquiry to inform data collection. I had intended for them to be case studies of the individual children, however, when I began to collect data I realised that it was more helpful to view each case as a family unit. This is because the children's stories often overlapped with their siblings and parents. In cases where the parents were present, they frequently added rich details which embellished the narratives and provided a holistic picture. I did not want to discard this information, so have written each case up as a family. Yin (2013) writes that the case study method enables the researcher to redefine the "case" after collecting some early data, just as I did. He also suggests that a "case" is bound by some sort of entity, be it a condition, event or social phenomenon. In my research, the case was bound by the members belonging to a family.

3.6.3. Design of the Case Studies

As I had already collected and begun to analyse a sizeable amount of data from the questionnaires in Phase One of the research, there were some emergent themes that I wanted to explore further with the participants. Whilst I wanted the conversations to be largely directed by the young people and did not want to impose my own agenda, the emergent themes were central to my thinking and I sometimes used them as prompts to open a dialogue with the young person or their parent.

1. Time
2. Child-led education
3. Relationships
4. Difference
5. Reasons for Deciding to Home-Educate

6. Beliefs
7. The school system
8. Peers
9. Future Aspirations
10. Happiness
11. Discovery
12. Qualifications
13. Boundaries
14. LA Support
15. Government Legislation
16. Involvement with EPs

(All of these themes are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four)

I began to collect data by working with the young people who were all asked to draw a picture to best represent each day of the week. This gave me an idea of regular activities and any routines that were followed. I then allowed the young person to take the conversation in a direction of their choosing, within the confines of home-education. The meeting took place in a venue of the family's choosing. Often this was their own home, due to convenience. In one case, this was a university building, again for the convenience of the family as it was a location the family knew well.

I had activities planned based on each tool linked to the themes listed above. For example, the beads had letters on and I wanted the participants to think of one word that they thought best described home-education. In connection with the play dough, I wanted the young people to create their ideal learning environment, an adaptation of Heather Moran's Ideal Self task (2001). These tasks had been piloted with school attending children.

3.6.4 Rationale for Using Arts-Based Research Tools

I chose to begin the proceedings with a drawing activity as I had read some literature around children best being able to reflect their thoughts, especially traumatic ones through drawings (Handler, 1996). I did not assume that home-educated children had experienced trauma, equally, I was mindful that they may have done. From further reading around children's drawings, I

became aware of children's drawings being heavily analysed and used for assessment purposes. There were tests for interpretation, such as the Bender-Gestalt and the House-Tree-Person (Prosser, 2011) which through clear guidelines of interpretation provided information about the child's perceptual motor abilities and developmental level. Returning to children's depictions of trauma in their drawings, Cantlay (1996) stated that distress and trauma, particularly sexual abuse, is reflected in drawings through signs such as large heads, empty eyes, abundant hair and pointed teeth to name but a few. However, the interpretation of drawings in this way lacked validity and reliability as assessment tools (Underwager and Wakefield, 1990). Moreover, there was so much variability from drawing to drawing by the same child that it proved to be an unreliable source of evidence (Underwager and Wakefield, 1980). It is for these reasons that I did not want to analyse the images that the young people produced in my study. Prosser (1998) argued that drawings can be an invaluable tool in building rapport and facilitating communication, but he too warned against the dangers of using drawings to draw conclusions with an absence of description from the child. Therefore, drawings were used in my study as a rapport building activity and a vehicle for discussion. It was about the process rather than the outcome (the drawn image) that was most important. Parkinson (2001) commented that drawing gave children a concrete focus, reducing the need to maintain eye-contact with an unfamiliar adult thus helping to reduce anxieties. Additionally, drawings can take time allowing the participant to think about the topic and not have the pressure of providing a quick response (Dockett & Perry, 2005).

I was very aware that drawing and painting are a personal interest and not everyone enjoys the process. From the outset, I was intent on the young people being at the centre of my research. Therefore, it seemed contradictory to include activities that I liked. As such, I explored other means of facilitating conversations with young people.

I could have just conducted semi-structured interviews but my reading around listening suggested it was an active process and not limited to the spoken word (Clark, 2005). More importantly I wanted the research process to be enjoyable for the young person, something which other researchers

have commented on (Clark & Moss, 2011). Miller (1997) also wrote about the variety of ways that children may choose to express themselves. This shifted away from the spoken or written word, particularly interviews where there was a greater potential for a perceived power imbalance (Clark, 2005) and towards the use of cameras, audio equipment, map making and arts-based activities. I had intended to use a variety of these techniques over a sustained period of involvement with the participants. As recruitment took longer than I had anticipated, this meant that my involvement with the families was compacted, making projects such as photo elicitation harder to orchestrate. Given the difficulties in recruiting the young people, I did not want to create any further problems by assigning them tasks to do outside of the allotted time slot with me, nor did I want to encroach on any more of their time.

I share the view of Langsted (1994) that young people are experts in their own lives. They have a lot to tell us about their experience but, as adults, we face the challenge of 'tuning in to' them (Bruce, 1996). This meant finding tools which were of interest to young people. When I was out in schools as a trainee, I informally asked children what some of their favourite things were to do in school. The responses included, using the iPad, using play dough, drawing, threading beads and painting. Following the responses, I bought some play dough, drawing equipment and craft sets including bead threading. I did not take paints with me as I did not want to risk creating too much mess in participants' houses and I did not take an iPad as the applications that children told me they liked were games. I thought that these might be too absorbing and distract from the conversation I was hoping to facilitate.

3.6.5 Revisiting the Families

For some families, it was quite a distance that I travelled for a brief, concluding discussion. Peers had suggested that this could have been done over the phone or via email, but in my opinion, it was necessary for me to visit these families again. This is because the reaction I got from the young people, and indeed their parents, felt important. I revisited families with

children aged ten or over. I decided upon this criterion using Hart's (2013) guide as a reference point, which suggested children over the age of ten years are better able to self-reflect. For these children, I also constructed I Poems which I shared with them on the second visit. I Poems are one way of analysing qualitative data, focusing on the first-person narrative, providing a concrete outcome that can be shared with participants and can be used as a tool to aid self-reflection. I Poems are a specific method for analysing qualitative data developed by Gilligan (1992) in relation to psychological research with adolescent girls. (I Poems are discussed in further detail in Section 3.6.6)

During this visit, I also asked the young people to complete an evaluation form regarding their thoughts on the research process. Some of the questions were quantitative as they involved Likert scales. However, I did not want to force people into boxes, so I ensured there was a section which had sentence starters which the young people were asked to complete.

For example, "My favourite part of the project was..."

Gathering participants' views about their involvement in my research was important in answering research question six: "How did the young people perceive the process of talking about, and reading back, their experiences?"

Creswell and Miller (2000) define member checking as the process by which participants confirm or disconfirm the voices and stories composed from the narratives. I followed the member checking process as set out by Simpson and Quigley (2016) who also used I poems in their work. The process they used was broken down into five steps which I adapted for the purposes of my research. I felt that slight adaptations were necessary given the age of the children I was working with and the level of cognition they were likely to be at in comparison to the adolescents that Simpson and Quigley (2016) were working with. As such, my member checking took the following form:

1. I poems were read by and reflected on by participants. Participants were given the option of reading the poems themselves or having them read aloud by the researcher or parent.

2. The researcher asked the participants to highlight any information which they thought was incorrect or they wanted altered. Participants were also asked if they would like any of the information removed.
3. Children (and parents who had I poems) had the opportunity to share them with siblings and other family members who were in the room.
4. A discussion was generated around the I poems.

At the time of the member checking, I was still amidst writing up my research and I had not anticipated how valuable I would find my descriptions of each family to be. When I described the research process, anonymously, to my supervisors, the seemingly minute details became more important in embellishing my journey and the context in which I had been working. If the details were too revealing the families may be identifiable so I had to be careful with what I was saying and writing. Equally, the words I used to describe the families needed to be factual and without feeling which was hard when I was trying to capture my experiences and the perception from my lens. With repeated editing, expressive and highly descriptive words have been removed to retain an accurate and factual report of my experiences. If I was to repeat this research, I would endeavour to include detailed descriptions of each family, but would member check these with the families before inclusion to ensure I was being ethically appropriate. Descriptions have the potential to be a catalyst to ethical issues, particularly if the family is offended by or does not agree with the way in which they have been described. As such, my descriptions have been edited to be as neutral and factual as possible.

3.6.6 Using I Poems as an Approach to Analysing the Data

I constructed I poems using the transcribed data of my work with young people and their parents. I poems emerged from the work that Gilligan did with women, facilitating them to share their stories at a time when research was more heavily orientated to understanding the views of males (Gilligan, 1982). In some ways, I felt that this mirrored the current research landscape where school based children's views are more commonly sought than home-educated children's. There are fewer home-educated young people than

school attenders and therefore one might expect it to be a less researched area, nonetheless, I felt that the idea of an under-represented group in the literature being heard in a creative way drew many parallels to my work.

As Burg (2004) explains, poetry documents lived experiences in an interesting and artful manner. It brings the individual narratives to the forefront and fits distinctly within my epistemological approach to this research. Cahnmann (2003) states that I poems provide an alternative to the positivist perspective of knowing. Instead, I poems are an empowering form for participants' voices to be heard, in the very words that they have shared. When choosing I poems for my research, I was aware that it was somewhat controversial as it is fairly uncommon and goes beyond the parameters of traditional research (Burg, 2004). It seemed fitting that I would use an unconventional method of analysis through *The Listening Guide* when working with home-educators who have themselves stepped out of the conventional school system.

The method of constructing an I poem is very different to that of constructing a regular poem. The emphasis is not on using literary forms such as rhythm, alliteration and metaphors to create effects. Instead, I poems are a product of a clear analysis strategy as set out by the *Listening Guide* (Gilligan, 1982). There are three steps to this style of analysis:

Step One: Reading for the plot. Once I had transcribed the interview, I read and re-read it, alongside the notes from my researcher diary to better understand the plot (any problems and actions that occurred), the characters (school friends, siblings, parents) and the context that the participant was in. This stage was about highlighting subjectivities and an awareness of my own lens as a researcher. A summary of my reflections is found at the beginning of each I poem.

Step Two: Understanding the Narrative. Once I had a better understanding of my own feelings and experiences regarding the collection of the data and interactions with participants, I could then form an overall narrative. What exactly was the young person trying to tell me? What chronological sequence had their educational path taken? This step was about

understanding the overall narrative from the transcript in its entirety rather than dissecting it and considering quotes in isolation.

Step Three: The Construction of the I Poems. The construction involved underlining each sentence containing a first person pronoun such as “I”, “my” or “me.” I created a new document where all of these statements were stored in order to preserve the sequence in which they were said. If the sentence made sense on its own and was relevant to the theme being discussed, these were generally kept and formed a line of the poem. The same process was repeated for sentences about “them”, “they,” “she” and “he.” This highlighted the perceived difference between the participants and another group or other individuals. These statements were aligned to the right of the page. The process was also repeated for statements containing “us” and “we.” These statements were centrally aligned. The order in which they were said still being preserved.

Using the *Listening Guide* (Gilligan, 1982) as my basis for analysis appropriately recognised the complexity of the narratives that were being told. The *Listening Guide* acknowledges that a person talks about the world with many voices; the ‘plot voice’ which explains what happened; the ‘I voice’ which locates the person within their own narrative; and the ‘they’ voice which again is helpful in locating the participant in relation to others.

The *Listening Guide* has been proven to be a useful style of analysis particularly in analysing sensitive subjects. It was originally used to facilitate the sharing of the under-represented female voice. Sorsoli and Tolman (2008) studied survivors of sexual abuse and found the *Listening Guide* to be instrumental in identifying two voices with these survivors, one of which expressed a need to talk about the abuse that had occurred and the other expressed a need to forget. Sorsoli and Tolman state that both voices were equally valid and important. Coding a transcript may have also highlighted this, but I feel that the *Listening Guide* draws the researcher’s attention to each voice and by following the steps, also encourages a greater awareness of the researcher’s own feelings towards the dialogue and what was felt at the point of collection.

All of the steps of this process enabled me to identify themes relevant to each narrative. When I reflected on my experiences and re-read the transcripts, recurrent themes began to emerge. The sentences within the I poems themselves fell into natural verses around a specific theme. Much like the questionnaire data which was colour coded around themes, the same was carried out with the transcripts. I then compiled a summary of themes within each case, keeping each family's narrative central. Following this I then identified themes that arose across cases.

The I poems were a product of the analysis, not the analysis itself. They were constructed following careful thought, coding and identification of the different voices running throughout the narratives. Having the I poems gave me a product to present participants with in order to member check their narratives and signify the end of their involvement in my research.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was also employed to understand the possible meanings of situations beyond the words that were used (Weiss and Wodak, 2007). This was not the main form of analysis, as outlined above, the *Listening Guide* was used to systematically draw out the different voices present in the transcripts. In many ways the *Listening Guide* is itself a form of CDA as it explores beyond the surface of the text and situates the narrative within a social context. It considers how the participant views themselves in relation to others and how they view their position in society. This relates to the fourth and fifth research questions:

What are the thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education for young people?

What are the thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education for parents?

To better understand participants' thoughts and emotions, they had to be communicated to the researcher. The arts-based approach gave the participants time to think and have inner dialogues about their thoughts. The product then offered a stimulus for discussion and these words were analysed. CDA moves away from focusing on smaller units of language, such as quotes from transcripts. Just as the *Listening Guide* encourages the researcher to understand the plot that is being told from the whole transcript

first. Significantly, CDA focuses on the dimensions of naturally occurring language such as grammatical details, turn-taking and gestures. I was not concerned about the grammatical details but felt noting interjections by parents/siblings and certain gestures, such as smiling and the shrugging of shoulders were symbolic of an alternative meaning. Gestures and nuances were noted in the transcript, although these were not analysed at great depth. They contribute to my findings and discussions of the families.

3.7 An Observational Component

The style of observation I adopted was 'participant observation.' According to Bell (2014), this involves the researcher participating in a group or community; listening, observing, questioning and trying to understand the lives of the individuals concerned. I took a non-structured approach, meaning that I did not use pre-determined categories and classifications. Instead I was exploring the views of participants to give me a better knowledge base and understanding going forward into the case studies.

For the purposes of this research, I attended the Forest School on a day which was specifically for home-educated young people. There were two groups running simultaneously; one of which was for over five year olds and one which was for under five years who were accompanied by their parents.

As the aim of my visit was to recruit families, I went with the under fives group, so as I could speak to their parents. I accompanied them whilst they supported their children take apart a large den and create their own, having conversations about home-education as we went along. I believe these conversations to include crucial pieces of information. Not only did I facilitate such conversations but I began to play a more active role. I fully immersed myself in the activities, such as helping the children to start fires to toast marshmallows, to the extent that I felt that I was being seen as a volunteer. I was invited back to assist at subsequent sessions which unfortunately I was unable to attend.

It should be noted that I had not planned for this to form part of my research; I had only intended to attend this Forest School group in order to inform people about my research and generate interest to recruit participants.

However, I found myself participating in the Forest School activities; including building dens, singing around the fire and toasting marshmallows! More importantly, I was able to have some conversations with home-educating parents. The majority of these conversations were audio recorded and I have transcribed these as I felt the data were incredibly valuable. The conversations were purely exploratory, again building on the themes listed in section 3.6.3 which emerged from the interviews. I had no set questions and I did not follow a rigid structure. It was more about mentioning the topics that had arisen and seeing where the participants took the conversations.

Forest School is essentially an outdoor learning environment. The particular group that I attended was led by a qualified teacher. The philosophy behind Forest School is that it is largely child-led. There are planned activities and sessions, but ultimately children are allowed to explore their environment freely choosing to engage, or not, with the planned sessions.

From my involvement in observational research, I consider it quite distinct to other forms of qualitative research. I feel that there was a shift in power. I was entering the participants' 'territory.' Arguably, I was also doing that when I conducted the case studies, however the difference with the Forest School was that I was in the minority. There were multiple families, but only one of me. I feel that this 'safety in numbers' may have encouraged the participants to be less guarded in what they said.

3.8 Researcher Diary and Field Notes

The literature suggests that keeping a researcher diary, field notes, log, note book or something similar is an important record of the research project (Bell, 2014). Bell (2014) states that there is some debate about what goes in a research diary but if unsure, the researcher should include it. For example, rough notes, brief summaries, target dates, telephone numbers and email addresses of people spoken to, good ideas and so forth. I kept this diary initially for personal use in terms of tracking my researcher journey. It soon became a valuable point of reference and instrumental in gathering my thoughts, particularly following the visits to my participants. As such, I make reference to my field notes and they have contributed towards the 'pen

portraits' I have made for each family. Extracts from my diary can be found in the Appendices (pages 209 – 212).

3.9 Phase One and Two: Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical consideration I had and continue to have is around protecting the identities of the families that have participated in this research. From the difficulties I encountered in recruiting participants, I understand that some communities do not look upon families that participate in such research in a favourable light. Therefore, it is even more important that I protect the identities of these families to ensure that they do not face any negativity. This has required a balancing act, as I felt that some participants (largely the young people) were proud of their story, and wanted it shared. Once the protocols of research were explained to them, all young people obliged and chose a pseudonym. By allowing the young people to choose, I felt this went some way to allowing them to retain ownership over their stories.

Through my work as a trainee educational psychologist, I also worked alongside several families who home-educated. I supported them in their applications for Education, Health and Care Plans and with general advice. With some of the families, the circumstances surrounding their decisions to home-educate were not positive or were highly sensitive. In such instances, I did not think it would be ethical to add unnecessary complications and possible trauma by recounting their journeys. Additionally, I felt in cases where I was heavily involved in a professional context, it would be unhelpful to see me in a researcher role as well. Therefore, I made the decision to invite these families to participate in the electronic questionnaire but beyond the invite at the end of the questionnaire did not push the case study element of the research.

A more extensive list of ethical considerations were listed in the ethical form that was submitted to the University of Exeter's Graduate School of Education in order to receive approval (Appendix 1, page 134). The research rationale and the potential methods of recruiting participants were discussed with academic tutors and a Local Authority's Educational Psychology

Service staff. Furthermore, I took account of the Code of Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2009) and the guidelines from the Health and Care Professions Council (2016).

I ensured that appropriate information regarding the aims of the study and the processes involved were explained in writing to both parents and the young people. I adapted the young people's form to ensure it was in child-friendly language and clarified their understanding regarding participation prior to beginning any conversations around home-education with them. The participant information sheets can also be found in the Appendices (160-166).

I ensured the safety and well-being of each of the participants by arranging all conversations to take place in a location of their choosing, either their home or a public space. The anonymity of the participants has been protected as all audio recordings will be destroyed following the completion of this project. Furthermore, the data collected through questionnaires and interviews were held in a secure and encrypted device.

I was particularly aware that some of the young people in the research were raising sensitive topics, such as that of bullying. Therefore, even though consent had been sought, I did not want to assume that all information could be used. This was an issue raised by Greig, Taylor and MacKay (2012) who mentioned the abuse of power which can sometimes occur in such projects. They argue that in any research, the researcher has the potential to be in a position of power. There are varying levels to which this power can knowingly or unknowingly be used. For example, misrepresenting the young person's story when they think they have understood the account. Ultimately, it is the researcher who writes the project up and they could naively assume that they have permission to include all of the data they collected, even around more sensitive issues; a potential abuse of power. Additionally, young people may feel coerced into saying certain things as they think that it is what the researcher wants to hear. As such, I ensured that oral consent was checked upon the closure of each session.

“We believe it is good practice to revisit the issue of consent within the interview itself with specific oral consent being sought for unanticipated emerging sensitive issues.” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2010, p. 53)

I also used the final visit, when I asked the participants to complete an evaluation regarding their involvement in the project as another opportunity to confirm, following some thinking space, that they were still content for their information to be used in the project. I did not encounter any objections to any of the information being shared.

Chapter Four: Findings: Phase One

4.0 Overview

The questionnaire consisted of six screening questions, which check the respondents' eligibility for participation in the project. It includes questions which check that the participant is over the age of sixteen, that they

understand their right to withdraw at any point and that they understand the information provided about the study. As of February, a week before the questionnaire was due to close, due to a natural decline in responses, there had been 125 people who had accessed the questionnaire. Of these 125, 60 people had completed the questionnaire in its entirety.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

I am reporting the findings in the form of descriptive statistics and frequency tables as they provide a clear, visual representation of the data that I have collected. When I designed the questionnaire, I devised the questions as part of themes which emerged from the literature review. For the purposes of consistency, I am presenting the findings under these themes.

Descriptive statistics and graphs for all questions can be found in the Appendices (pages 167 - 208). I have included visual representations of questions that I considered to significantly contribute towards my developing and changing view of home-education at this point in my research journey. In trying to make sense of some of the quantitative data and qualitative statements, I have drawn upon my developing knowledge of home-education which has meant considering elements of Phase Two of the research.

4.2 Exploratory Questions

The exploratory questions aimed to gather some background information about the participants and their families. I was interested in understanding more about the set-up of home-education; for example, how many children are educated, is this a more prevalent phenomenon in primary or secondary aged young people, and who provides the majority of the education.

The data indicates that the majority of participants were females (sixty-six), with only eight male participants.

I had two questions which explored the composition of these families, in terms of better understanding the size of these families and deciphering

whether the decision to home-educate was a blanket decision for all children or child specific.

Figure 3

Q8: How many school-aged children live within your household?

Answered: 73 Omitted: 52

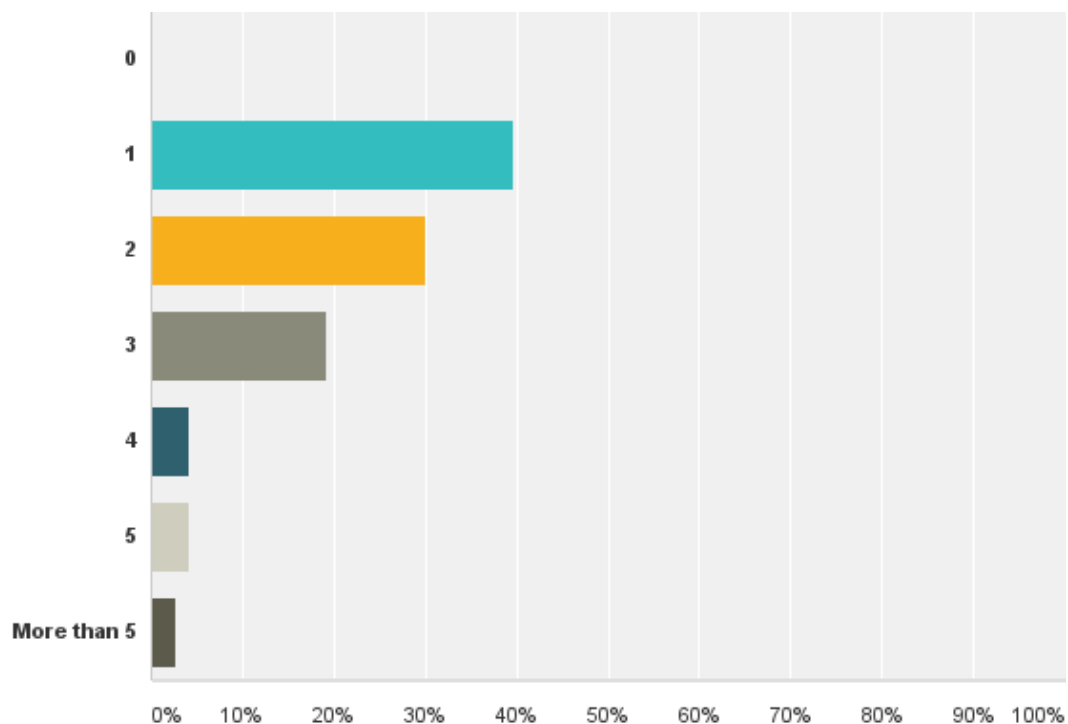


Table 1

Answer Choices	Responses	
0	0.00%	0
1	39.73%	29
2	30.14%	22
3	19.18%	14
4	4.11%	3
5	4.11%	3
More than 5	2.74%	2
Total		73

Question eight shows that the majority of participants had one school-aged child within the household, closely followed by families that were had two children of school-age. Two families had more than five school-aged children within their household.

Figure 4

Q9: How many school-aged children are home-educated in your household?

Answered: 73 Omitted: 52

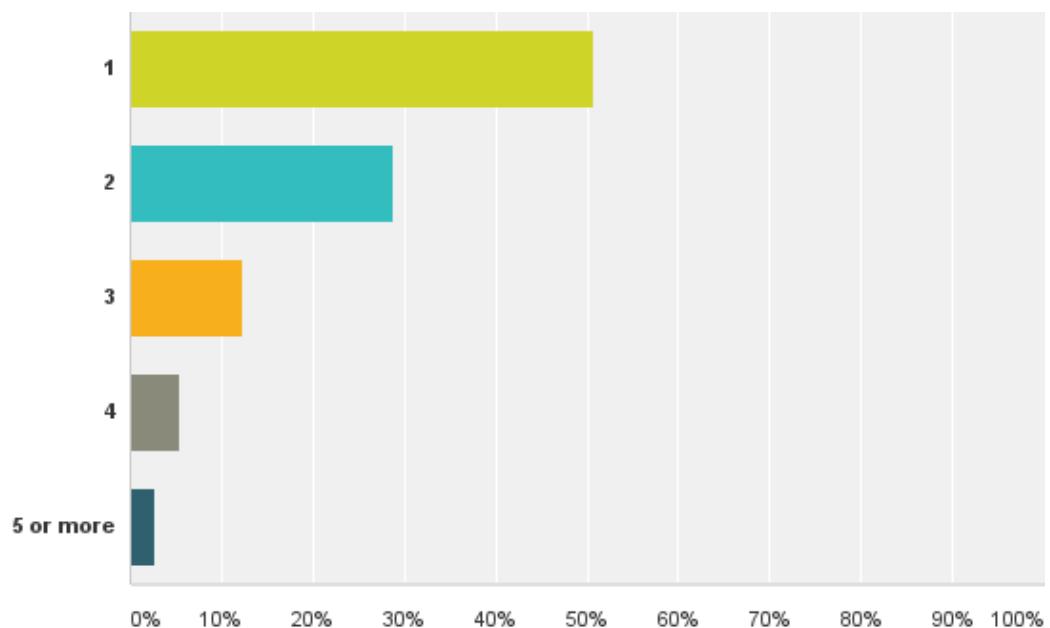


Table 2

Answer Choices	Responses	
1	50.68%	37
2	28.77%	21
3	12.33%	9
4	5.48%	4
5 or more	2.74%	2
Total		73

Question 9 asked respondents about the number of home-educated children within their household. Thirty-seven participants home-educated just one child, while twenty-one participants home-educated two children. Nine participants home-educated three children. I found it particularly interesting to compare the data between Question 8 and 9. There was a higher number of participants home-educating a single child than there were families that reported having just one school-aged child at home. This would suggest that some families who had two or three school-aged children at home were home-educating just one of those children, suggesting that the rest went to school or had another form of education such as a private tutor.

This indicated that not all participants were strongly against systems and educational institutions as they were choosing for some of their children to attend. This was in contrast to most of the families that I met for Phase Two of the research, who demonstrated a more philosophical and deeply rooted belief that home-education was right for their family. This leads me to speculate that perhaps for the families who were educating just one of their children, in a family where the child had siblings, that it was more of a circumstantial arrangement. Subsequent questions explore this further.

Interestingly, the two families who reported having five or more school-aged children within their household, home-educated all of their children. I would assume these families to be more similar to the ones which I worked with for the case studies, in terms of having strong philosophical groundings. However, these are just speculative comments.

Question 10 shows that the majority of families who participated in my questionnaire are home-educating just primary aged children (thirty-nine), although there were twenty families educating just secondary children and fifteen families who were home-educating both primary and secondary young people.

Question 11 was designed to ascertain the proportion of home-educators who had children with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. EHC plans are available for children and young people up to the age of twenty-five years who require special educational needs support. EHC plans identify the specific needs of the individual young people and set out the additional support

required to meet those needs. In hindsight, EHCs are rather specialised and participants who do not have one, or have not come across them before, this is likely to be a confusing term. This was not something which was identified when I piloted the questionnaire and subsequent informal conversations with participants who piloted it for me commented that if they did not know what the term meant, they would assume that they did not have one. Nevertheless, if I was to repeat this study, I would give a brief overview of what an EHC was. Given the demographic that I am accessing, some of these respondents have had no involvement whatsoever with the education system, so EHC plans might be totally unfamiliar to them.

I was keen to discover the proportion of home-educators who had young people in receipt of an EHC plan as this would indicate those who had a level of additional need. The literature review highlighted that having unmet special educational needs was one of the reasons that parents opted to home-educate.

Findings from this question indicated that only six respondents reported their child having an EHC plan. One person preferred not to disclose this information and sixty-seven people said their child was not in receipt of an EHC plan. This would suggest that the majority of respondents did not have children who had special educational needs that could not be met in school with reasonable adjustments being made.

Of those who said that their child did have an EHC plan, I asked if they could explain what their child's main area of need is. Of these six respondents, four said that their child has autism, one has cerebral palsy and one has "complex emotional needs." One of the participants who said that their child has autism, also said that they probably have pathological demand avoidance (PDA) and "sensory processing/modulation disorder."

4.3 Relationships

Relationships were another emergent theme from the literature review so I wanted to explore how these were impacted. In order to do this, I felt that I needed to know who provided the majority of education. Question 12 targeted this and I found that the majority of home-education was provided by the

mother (70.27%) with none of the families reporting that the father provided the majority of education. 18.92% reported the mother and father having an equal input, 2.70% reported grandparents having this role, 2.70% said an external agency was the main provider and 5.41% marked the 'other' category.

Those who opted for the 'other' option had the opportunity to provide further details. One respondent said that education was mainly provided by the mother, but the father had an input, as time allows. Another respondent said that "private tutors" provided the majority of education. One respondent explained that their child attended school part-time for "2-3 days, plus mother and father equally." Finally, one respondent said "the child himself."

Unfortunately, they did not elaborate further on this and I would have been interested to know how this worked. This could possibly refer to child-led learning, meaning that the child indicates topics which are of interest to them and then, with the support of an adult, considers how they will access the information needed to learn more about these topics. Alternatively, it may mean that the child self-teaches without any adult guidance.

In Phase Two, some of the families I met had more of a child-led approach, where the children dictated the topics that they wanted to learn about and were encouraged to explore these further. Essentially, there was no curriculum that was imposed on the young people. However, the families still considered the adult as being the provider of the education as they would stimulate their interest in the topic further.

With an overview of the main educator in the household, I wanted to explore the participants' perceptions of the effect that this might have on their relationship with the young person. This question was influenced in part by personal experiences of being a teacher and by Van Galen's (1991) work, mentioned in the Literature Review, which proposed there are a group of home-educators who are choosing to educate in this way with the purpose of improving intra family relationships. I understand the difficulties in adopting multiple roles. For example, being the educational provider, disciplinarian, parent and source of comfort. I wanted the respondent to reflect and consider if these, potentially conflicting roles, had an impact on the way the adult perceived their relationship with the young person.

The following question was asked:

Q13: Do you feel that your home-educated child/children's relationship with the main educator is different to other adults in your household?

Forty-two participants considered that their home-educated child/children's relationship with the main educator was no different to with other adults within the household. Fifteen respondents considered there to be a difference, and fifteen said that it was not applicable. I was intrigued by the qualitative comments that were made by respondents which can be seen in the table below. The comments made relate to research questions one (what are the main factors for parents choosing to home-educate) and five (what are the thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education for parents?). For many of the participants their decision to home-educate was largely influenced by the increased amount of time that they would have with their children and subsequently the better quality, or different, relationships they would form with their children. Several participants shared their thoughts about their approach to home-education, for example, it being "a team effort" and some parents viewed themselves as a "facilitator" rather than an educator. (Please note, statements are copied exactly as the respondents' wrote them, inclusive of errors):

Table 3

Participant Number	If yes, what do you feel is different and why do you think this might be?	Date and Time of Response
#1	Spend more time together	November 2016
#2	Because I spend more time with them. Their father works away often as salaries in London are better and this facilitates us to be able to home educate. The relationship with him is not better or worse, just different. They have more in depth conversations with me and have more conversations about computer games for example with him.	November 2016

#3	Grandparents are both phds from Oxbridge – husbands parents, very intelligent. One phd is economics, other is physics and was a contemporary of Stephen Hawking. Two youngest want to be home ed and spend time with grandparents! Two youngest get annoyed when they have to go to school	August 2016
#4	**** is much closer to my wife than me, i feel- we work as a family obviously but my wife being a teacher is the parent who works most closely with ****. I help the other kids with homework but i feel that my wife and **** have a closer relationship than she does with the other kids.	August 2016
#5	I am a single parent. Although I am the main caregiver and therefore educator, my boy's education is driven by him and ends up being a bit of a team effort. My friends/family have varied areas of expertise and each has an input. He has good relationships with all.	August 2016
#6	I don't regard my self as an 'educator'. I facilitate my children's learning. We (my children and my self) spend nearly all our time together so we have a very strong bond. My husband is around in the evenings, weekends and holidays. He is also very close to our children but freely admits that he's not as closely bonded as I am to them.	August 2016
#7	She is a lot closer to me, mainly due to different parenting styles, but also due to me being home full-time and Dad only part-time.	August 2016
#8	Closer since we are together all the time.	August 2016
#9	Other adults in the home are 2 sisters and a disabled father. Mum is the main carer and source of education and advice so the relationship is strong and co-operative.	July 2016
#10	Well yes , I'm his mum and my relationship is clearly different to that of the other adult here- his dad , our relationship has changed since we have been home educating. It has improved and we are much closer.	July 2016
#11	I don't feel that my role as mother and educator can be separated. As such my relationship with the children is naturally different to that of their relationship with their Father and Grandmother (both live in the home) because I am their mother.	July 2016
#12	Closer, more respectful, more understanding, more forgiving. I think this is due to spending so much time together and working productively together on a joint aim.	July 2016

#13	Distance from the mom and dad relationship has been important for our daughter in her academic learning.	July 2016
#14	She is closer to her mother, but this is more down to characteristics than to being home educated. The relationship maybe closer since home educating as there is even more trust now.	July 2016
#15	Yes but not because of the home education. My son is just particularly attached to me, his mother. He has a level of trust and confidence in me and can fully relax with me which I think he cannot do with his father whom he seems to be somewhat in awe of and loves and respects so greatly that he feels under pressure to live up to some expectation there.	July 2016
#16	The secondary school aged child is closer to me as we spend more time together. The primary school aged child is equally close to both parents.	July 2016

4.4 Emergent Themes

4.4.1 Time

Using Braun and Clarke's method of thematic analysis, I have drawn out the main recurring themes which have been colour coded. The first theme that I have chosen is that of "time." Statements relating to this theme have been highlighted in yellow. Respondents indicate that purely because of spending more time together, the quality of the relationship they have with their child improves.

4.4.2 Child-Led Education

The two statements that have been highlighted in turquoise relate to the notion discussed earlier in this section about some families wanting the education to be led by the children. One respondent writes, "my boy's education is driven by him." Initially, I thought that this might be the same individual that responded to the question regarding the main education provider as being the child himself. However, tracking the individual responses, I understand that this is a different person. Another individual commented that the two youngest children "want to be home ed." This belief that parents should be honouring their children's choices rather than making decisions for them was echoed in the observational work I did and also came

to the forefront in some of my case studies. In some instances, I felt that it was the parents' seeking comfort in their decision; almost reassuring themselves that it is what their child wants, rather than something they are imposing on them.

4.4.3 Close Relationships

Another emergent theme is that of close and strong relationships. I have highlighted statements relating to this theme in **fuchsia**. Some respondents, such as participant number 14, explain that the child was closer to one parent anyway based upon characteristics rather than home-education. However, I think participant number 14 is particularly interesting because it seems that there is some self-reflection in their statement and even after saying that the closeness of the relationship is not due to home-education, they reflect and say that it "maybe closer since home-educating as there is even more trust now." Participant number seven also comments that there is a close relationship but does not attribute it to home-education as such. Instead, commenting that it is due to them being at home full-time and different parenting styles. Alongside the notion of "closeness," participant 9 also mentions the relationship being "strong and co-operative."

4.4.4 Difference

The final theme I have highlighted is that of difference. Statements which I feel link to this theme are shown in **green**. Generally, I get the sense that parents felt they were unable to compare quality of relationships as they were so different that a comparison was not appropriate. For example, participant number 10 states, "I'm his mum and my relationship is clearly different to that of the other adult here – his Dad." As mentioned, when I designed this question I had done so due to my preconceptions regarding role conflict. I was surprised that out of the seventy-two respondents that answered this question, only two commented on this. Participant 11 said that she did not "feel her role as mother and educator can be separated." This is in contrast to participant 13 who said that "distance from the Mum and Dad relationship has been important for our daughter in her academic learning." Here, these differences,

in my opinion, represent the different dynamics that are at play for different families. For one family, it was important to distinguish between these roles, for another it was difficult to differentiate between the roles and for the majority, this was not even a consideration.

4.5 Reasons for Deciding to Home-Educate

The literature highlighted some potential reasons as to why parents might opt for home-education and I was interested to find out if currently there is any singular main contributing factor to this decision. This led me to form Question 14 which was presented to participants in a rating format. They were given six potential reasons as to why they might have chosen home education, which were the ones prevalent in existing research. They were asked to rate how strongly they agreed that these factors had been influential in their decision. Respondents were also asked to provide any other reasons in a comment box. The six factors I provided them with were:

- Alternative Lifestyle
- Religious reasons
- Dissatisfaction with the school's ability to cater for the child's needs
- Dissatisfaction with the curriculum taught at school
- Child was struggling to cope with school stressors
- Temporary decision whilst awaiting a suitable school placement

The findings are as follows:

Figure 5

Q14: Were the following factors influential on your decision to home-educate?

Answered: 69 Omitted: 56

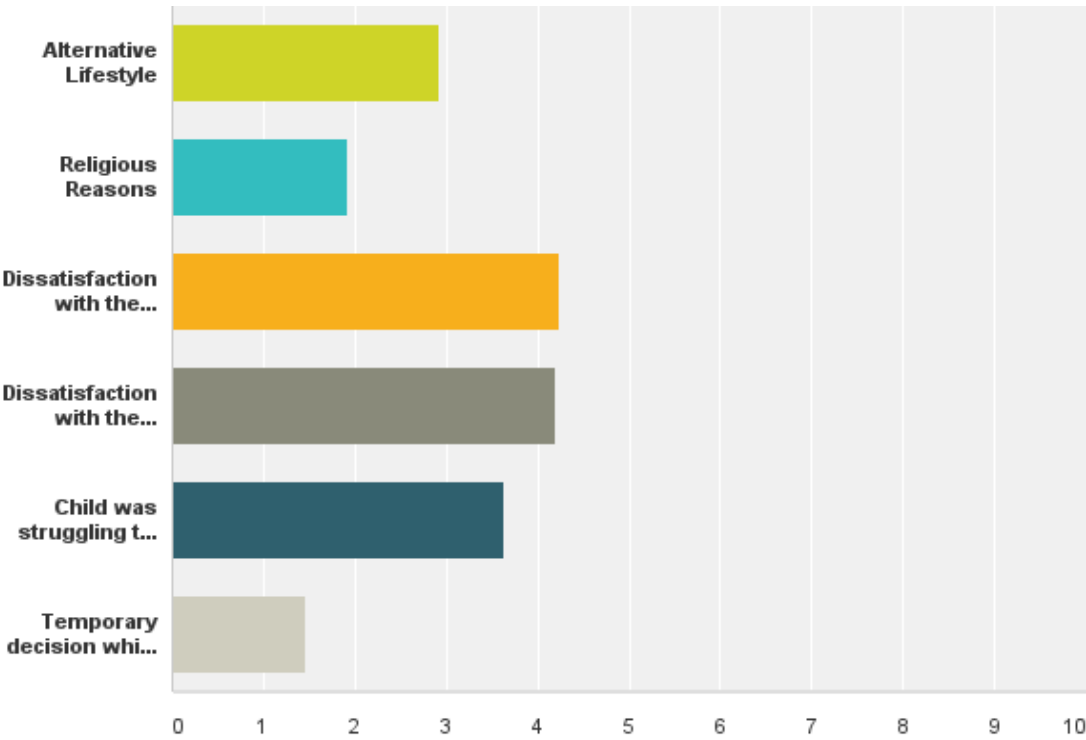


Table 4

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
Alternative Lifestyle	20.59% 14	8.82% 6	39.71% 27	19.12% 13	11.76% 8	68	2.93
Religious Reasons	63.24% 43	4.41% 3	13.24% 9	14.71% 10	4.41% 3	68	1.93
Dissatisfaction with the school's ability to cater for child's needs	1.45% 1	4.35% 3	14.49% 10	28.99% 20	50.72% 35	69	4.23
Dissatisfaction with the curriculum taught at school	2.94% 2	1.47% 1	16.18% 11	32.35% 22	47.06% 32	68	4.19
Child was struggling to cope with school stressors	11.94% 8	7.46% 5	28.36% 19	10.45% 7	41.79% 28	67	3.63
Temporary decision whilst awaiting a suitable school placement	78.46% 51	1.54% 1	15.38% 10	4.62% 3	0.00% 0	65	1.46

The data shows that the two most influential factors of those provided were parents' dissatisfaction with the school's ability to cater for the child's needs and dissatisfaction with the curriculum taught at school. The least influential factor was that it was a temporary decision whilst awaiting a suitable school placement. Given that the majority of my participants were accessed via established home-education online communities, it is perhaps unsurprising that none of the sixty-nine respondents that completed this question strongly agreed with this statement.

Weighted averages were used as this question involved a ranked response. A conventional average would not suffice as that would not provide an indication of the level of agreement. An average of agree or disagree would be unhelpful so a deeper mathematical analysis was needed which did not assume each data point to be equal (Lavrakas, 2008). The weights, or importance, are

assigned based on the frequency to which a response was given. For example, the option 'dissatisfaction with the school's ability to cater for the child's needs' was a 'strongly agreed' by 35 respondents as being an influential factor. The level of agreement, or rank, was also given a score between one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). The weighted average is calculated by the weight of the ranked response, multiplied by the frequency of the response (number of participants) added together and then divided by the total number of participants that ranked that specific factor.

For example to calculate the weighted average of 'alternative lifestyles':

$$\frac{(1 \times 14) + (2 \times 6) + (3 \times 27) + (4 \times 13) + (5 \times 8)}{68} = 2.93 \text{ (rounded to two decimal places)}$$

The third most influential factor, with a weighted average rating of 3.63, was the child's struggles for coping with school stressors. I think this is an important finding of my research, alongside the dissatisfaction with schools' abilities to cater for children's needs and the curriculum. If Local Authorities are looking to better support their community, perhaps changes need to happen earlier on, before the parents feel that home-education is their only option. In the Discussions section, I will consider further how Local Authorities can be more pro-active in supporting families rather than reactive.

Some respondents commented, providing their own reasons or elaborating on some of the listed options.

Table 5

Participant Number	If yes, what do you feel is different and why do you think this might be?	Date and Time of Response
#1	Inflexibility of the schooling system	November 2016
#2	The two children have never been to school so school was not a factor for them. We home educate for philosophical reasons as we believe school is not an efficient way to learn. Their older	November 2016

	sister did try school and some of the above were factors for her.	
#3	Reduced timetable. 9 hours a week at school, the rest at home.	November 2016
#4	Time with children, child decision .	September 2016
#5	None of the above response options align with the reason for choosing HE	August 2016
#6	Some of these (the Somewhat Disagrees) might have been true if she'd ever been at school. Lack of creativity within the school system – too regimented. Bullying of anyone slightly different is too common. Too much peer pressure, and poor socialisation outside of a narrow age range.	August 2016
#7	Belief in the value of self-directed learning and of the benefits of an individualised approach to education.	August 2016
#8	Eldest did one year at school, youngest never went.	July 2016
#9	School refusing to accept that they were the primary cause of anxiety which was resulting in health problems such as psoriasis.	July 2016
#10	Disagree with the school education system and the impact on mental health	July 2016
#11	Note on religious reasons, we are not religious and I did not want Christianity pushed on my children in school. Main reason, I believe schools are too standardized and not what I want for my children. I want them to have the opportunity to develop their own interests. They have never been to school.	July 2016
#12	My son had never liked school but her bag an year 3 with a very strict old fashioned older lady teacher, whom he was quite scared of, this coupled with some changes in his peer group escalated his unhappiness which lead to us removing him from school.	July 2016
#13	Dyslexia ignored by school	July 2016
#14	My son simply did not want to go to school and we were in a position to accommodate that. My husband (a very shy person whom I think my son is more like than myself) remembered the trauma of his first day at school and I remember more traumas than great things of my schooling and I believe I learned very little as a result of my schooling. What I learned, I learned myself outside of school. My husband learned a great deal through his schooling. I think he went to a	July 2016

	better school but he too has learned a great deal more outside school.	
#15	My daughters school closed down so initially it was a temporary arrangement. She loves it and her brother has chosen to home educate also.	July 2016
#16	Children have never been to school. Philosophical decision. Do not give schools or what they do much thought.	July 2016
#17	My son has never been to school	June 2016

4.6 Emergent Themes

4.6.1 Philosophical Beliefs

As before, I have used Braun and Clarke's method for grouping participants' statements into emergent themes. The first of these themes is that of philosophical reasons and comments related to this theme have been highlighted in yellow. When designing this questionnaire I overlooked philosophical reasons and, knowing what I know now, this is forms a large basis for parents' choice. As participant 16 states, their choice was a "philosophical decision" and they "do not give schools or what they do much thought." This would suggest that some parents are not making a decision based on a comparison between home and school. Instead they have beliefs, or a philosophy, that underpins their reasoning for home-education. As such, any improvements or alterations made to the school system are insignificant as it school is something which they are not concerned about.

I feel that part of the philosophy around home-education is about listening to the child's voice and acting on their wishes. Several participants allude to this. In fact participant 4 says, "child decision." This is echoed by participant 14 who states that, "my son simply did not want to go to school and we were in a position to accommodate that." Participant 15 explains that the daughter's school was closed down so home-education was initially a temporary decision. The participant then says "her brother has chosen to home educate also." Clearly, these are examples of children's opinions and views having a major influence; giving them authority and control over their own futures.

4.6.2 An Inflexible and Standardised School System

Whilst some respondents had an established, philosophical stance, regardless of what was occurring in schools, others had considered schooling. Several participants displayed dissatisfaction with school and this largely stemmed from a “lack of creativity.” (Participant 6) Statements which fell into this theme are highlighted in turquoise.

Participant 11 felt that “schools are too standardised.” They also said that they wanted their children “to have the opportunity to develop their own interests.” Certainly, the opportunity for creativity and encouraging children to follow their own interests was important for most, if not all, of the families who participated in the case studies. There was an emphasis on maintaining children’s thirst for learning and curiosity around topics of interest.

Participant 14 draws on her and her husband’s own experience of school. Again, this is something that I came across in the observational element of the study. A mother told me about how she was bullied at school and generally had an unpleasant experience so did not want to put her children through that. Participant 14 does not talk about bullying, but recounts her own schooling experience, stating that she learned very little from school. She appears to have a balanced view as she says that her husband did learn a lot from school, but concludes by saying that she learned “a great deal more outside school.”

4.6.3 Peers

Participant 6 and participant 12 make reference to peer group dynamics. Quotes relating to this have been highlighted in fuchsia. Participant 12 attributed some of their son’s unhappiness whilst he was at school to changes in his peer group. Although they do not detail exactly what these changes were. Participant 6 states that “bullying of anyone slightly different is too common.” Interestingly her opening comment about some of the statements “might have been true if she’d ever been at school” would lead me to assume that their child has never attended school. Therefore I am curious to know where their judgements and F about school have come from. It could be that a sibling has attended or similarly to participant 14, they are drawing on their

own experiences of school. Other comments that participant 6 makes about school is that there is “too much peer pressure” and “poor socialisation outside of a narrow age range.”

From my field notes, which I kept during my involvement with the families participating in the case studies, a recurrent theme that I noted is how confident and noticeably socially comfortable the home-educated young people appeared. All of the young people talked about friends who were of varying ages so it seemed that sociability, which is a potential negative stemming from the literature review, was actually what I perceived to be one of the home-educated young people’s main strength. The fact that they spent much of their time in the company of their parents, their parents’ friends and other home-educated young people of varying ages, meant that they did not appear fazed by talking to me. Several of the young people who attended school, and even those who did not, had friends that attended school. This was merely a part of life and the young people did not let their educational choices affect their friendships.

4.7 Future Aspirations

Question 36 asked respondents, “What are your hopes and aspirations for your home-educated child/children?” This question was open-ended and responses were qualitative.

4.7.1 Happiness

Fifty-one responses were collated and the most common theme was that of “happiness.” From the fifty-one responses, happiness was mentioned by twenty-seven participants.

4.7.2 Discovery

A second important theme was that around “discovery.” Participants talked about hoping that their children would, “discover what it is they want to do” and “to navigate the adult world.” The notion of children “finding” something of interest was repeated. For example, “to find her own way” and “to find the thing that they love.” It seemed that participants were viewing education as a

journey for one to sample opportunities and then “discover” one that was most of interest to them. As well as this theme emerging from the questionnaire, I also encountered this notion multiple times through the case studies and observation work that I became involved in. For many of the families, they were worried that a dry, prescriptive curriculum would cause their children to disengage from education entirely. Therefore, they wanted their children to almost take the lead and dictate the topics of learning, with the thought that if they chose what they were interested in then the learning would be more meaningful. With some families, they expressed that their children’s engagement in the topic would be for as long a time, or short as they wanted and should their child choose to stop learning about a specific topic, they would not be shamed for doing so. Their interest could be pursued within the home, through finding a specialist tutor or through attendance at a club or specific sessions.

4.7.3 Non-conformity and Qualifications

There was also a definite sense of a continued non-conformity beyond their years of home-education. For example, a participant commented, “the achieve everything they can without the pressures of having to assimilate in mainstream.” Another individual stated that they wanted their child “to have an actual education, instead of being taught the type of things that make one ideal to be a wage slave.” The topic of money was reiterated by another who said, “learning is lifelong and work is about so much more than money. I want them to be self-reliant as opposed to dependent on the state.” With regards to gaining employment, a participant stated that they wanted,

“employers to recognise that qualifications are not the be all and end all and that not all people like to write reams and that no having qualifications does not mean a person is stupid, or ignorant or uneducated.”

Having spoken to families, I am aware that there are some mixed feelings around qualifications. Many of the families I spoke to are aware that qualifications are needed for jobs and they accepted this. Gaining qualifications often did form part of their life plans, however, the difference between school attenders and the home-educated seemed to be in the

number qualifications they intended to do and the timing of their completion. For example, I understand that school attenders are typically encouraged to complete their GCSEs in Year 11 and there are certain expectations, dependent on the school, that core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics and some form of Science are non-negotiables. However, with the home-educated individuals, whilst they acknowledged that employers looked for the core subjects some families still believed that their children should only sit examinations for the subjects that were of interest to them. Many families did not want to wait until Year 11 for their children to sit the examinations and were willing to enter their children whenever they felt they were ready. I recall one family in particular who were following their child's lead and supporting her in preparing for a Mathematics GCSE. If she was at school, she would only be in Year 9. They were of the mind-set that if their daughter was interested in Mathematics, then they would pursue this interest to whatever level she wanted regardless of age. Once she had completed her Mathematics GCSE, if their daughter wanted to complete another GCSE they would support her in that.

4.7.4 Imposed Boundaries

Continuing from the previous theme regarding examinations being set for certain ages, there was the sense that education is imposed on young people for a set period in their life and a discontent around this. For example, a participant commented that, "education doesn't start and finish with school, education is called life!" Similarly, a respondent wrote, "learning is life long." Another commented, "stop forcing young people to waste the prime years of their lives going to university if it doesn't suit them." Discontent with the school system and what is imposed by, not only schools, but societies came to the forefront in this question. For example, a participant stated they wanted their child "to have life skills. I feel schools do not help with." A different respondent remarked, "they achieve whatever they want, not what government say they have to achieve."

In summary, the main aspirations were that home-educated young people are happy, continue learning for as long as they want to, explore topics of interest

to them and gain qualifications to assist them with entering employment should they so wish.

4.8 Local Authority Support

Question thirty-four asked, “Has your local authority offered you any support as a home-educator?” Of the sixty-two respondents to this question, sixteen said that they had been offered support. Respondents were then asked in the following question, “As a home-educator, is there any support you would like from your local authority which you feel you are not receiving?” The findings can be seen in Figure 6 and Table 6:

Figure 6

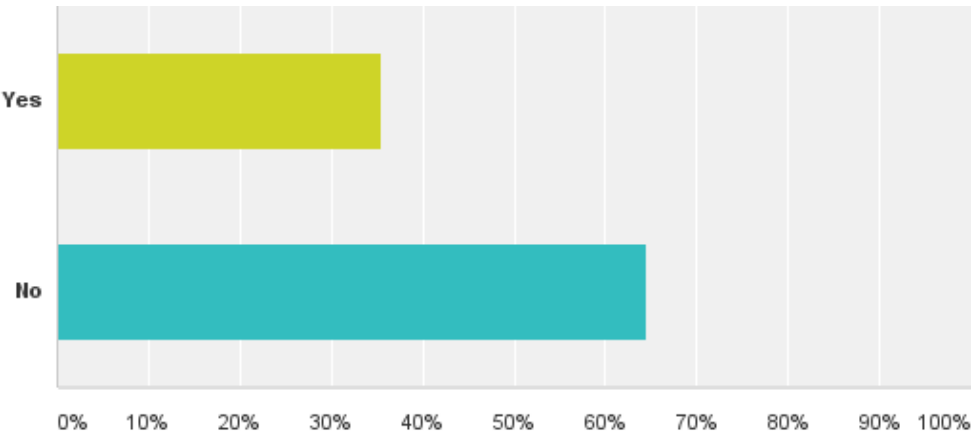


Table 6

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	35.48%	22
No	64.52%	40
Total		62

Comments were also welcomed from respondents and twenty-two people left a written note. The most common thing that respondents wanted was some kind of financial support, although there was a divide on this. Some people stated that despite the funding being helpful, if they asked for it, it would mean the LA would be “justified in asking us to ‘jump through hoops’ to justify their

spending.” Several respondents discussed the LA being able to “interfere” of they offered support. For example, “You can’t get support without strings. They’ll want to register you, monitor you and otherwise interfere.” Another said, “we’d like some help. But if we ask will they say we’re not coping?” Other comments included, “We as parents know what’s best for our children not the local authority.” With regards to home-education not being the norm, “and often seen as radical, odd or not in the best interest of the child. It is viewed by our LEA and I suspect others as a child abuse risk factor...This requires change and LEAs require an education on this.”

Aside from this scepticism were parents who wanted financial assistance and they made suggestions about the form that this might take. The following suggestions were made:

- “Financial support such as discounts, free curriculums and resources, free entry to places.”
- “Access to some of the many thousands of pounds I save the LEA by not sending them to school! Discount for courses, materials, access to a bank of tutors?”
- “Practical and financial help in arranging for special access arrangements for exams.”
- “Vouchers for trips, stationery or online educational programmes.”
- “Funding for an HE exam centre.”
- “...some kind of grant for equipment – such as physics and chemistry lab equipment.”
- “...H.E. children should be able to sit their exams free of charge, the same as their schooled peers.”
- “Money/tokens to pay for the many activities we attend.”

It would appear that those parents who would like financial assistance would like it in order to subsidise educational outings, resources and in exam arrangements.

Several respondents discussed ‘fairness’ and said that they just want what is offered to their school attending counterparts. For example, someone wrote, “Parents of schooled children get 5/6 hours a day freed up to get on top of tasks, work etc. no questions asked. I’d like a slice of that pie.”

Generally, this question seemed to have very divided responses. There were people that felt they had opted out of the school system so did not want anything from the LA, largely because they did not want to be monitored as they felt they knew what was best for their children. Alternatively, there were parents who welcomed financial assistance in the form of tokens, vouchers or funding for resources. Although some of those who wanted the financial assistance felt that any LA support would mean they would then be dictated to by the LA, so would therefore rather avoid any support altogether.

4.9 Impact of Legislation

Question twenty-three asked, “To what extent do you feel government legislation dictates the educational content you teach your child/children?” This was a closed-end question where participants were asked to rate how strongly they were affected. Fifty-three participants responded to this question and the findings can be seen in Figure 7 and Table 7.

Figure 7

Q23: To what extent do you feel government legislation dictates the educational content you teach your child/children?

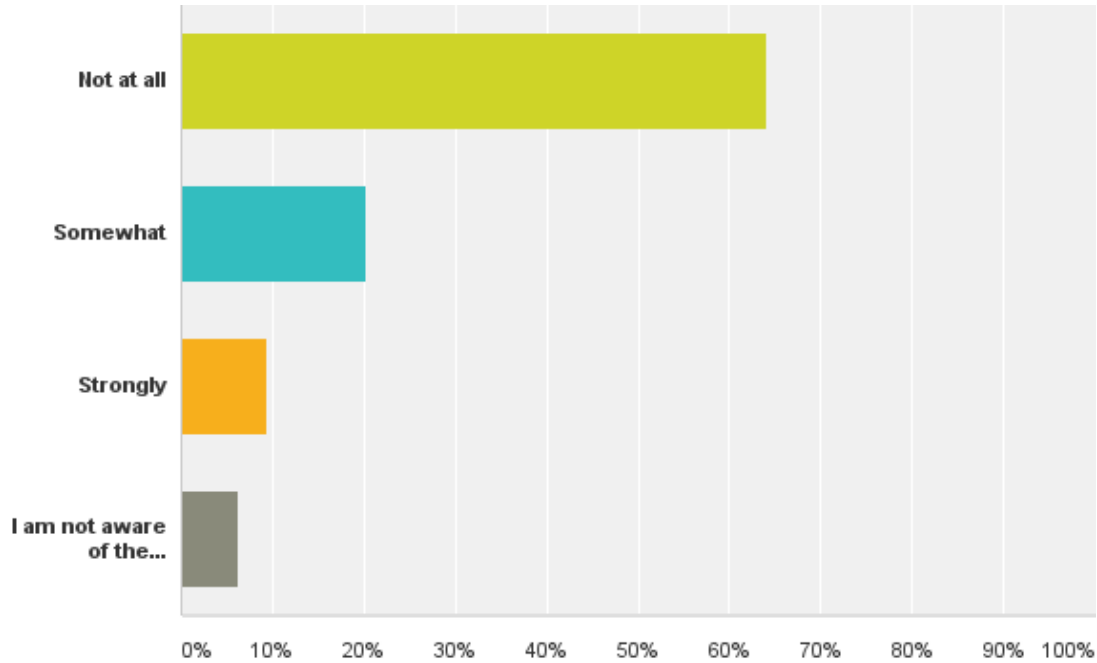


Table 7

Answer Choices	Responses	
Not at all	64.06%	41
Somewhat	20.31%	13
Strongly	9.38%	6
I am not aware of the government legislation.	6.25%	4
Total		64

The majority of respondents felt that legislation had no impact on what they taught their children with only six respondents feeling that it strongly affected them.

4.9.1 Involvement with Educational Psychology Services

Question thirty-two asked, “Do you currently have/or have you had any involvement from educational psychologists?” Sixty-three participants responded with the majority, fifty-three, saying that they did not have any involvement. This would suggest that the majority of respondents were not parents of children with additional needs.

Respondents who had been in receipt of that Educational Psychology involvement were then asked to rate the helpfulness of this involvement. The results can be seen in Figure 8 and Table 8.

Figure 8

Q33: How helpful did you find their advice?

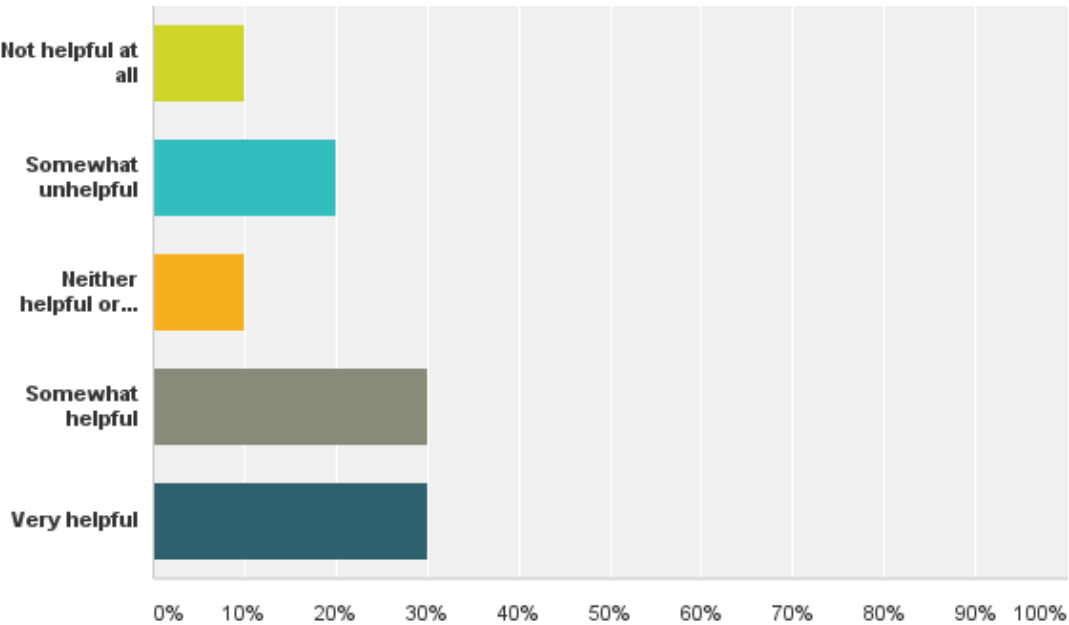


Table 8

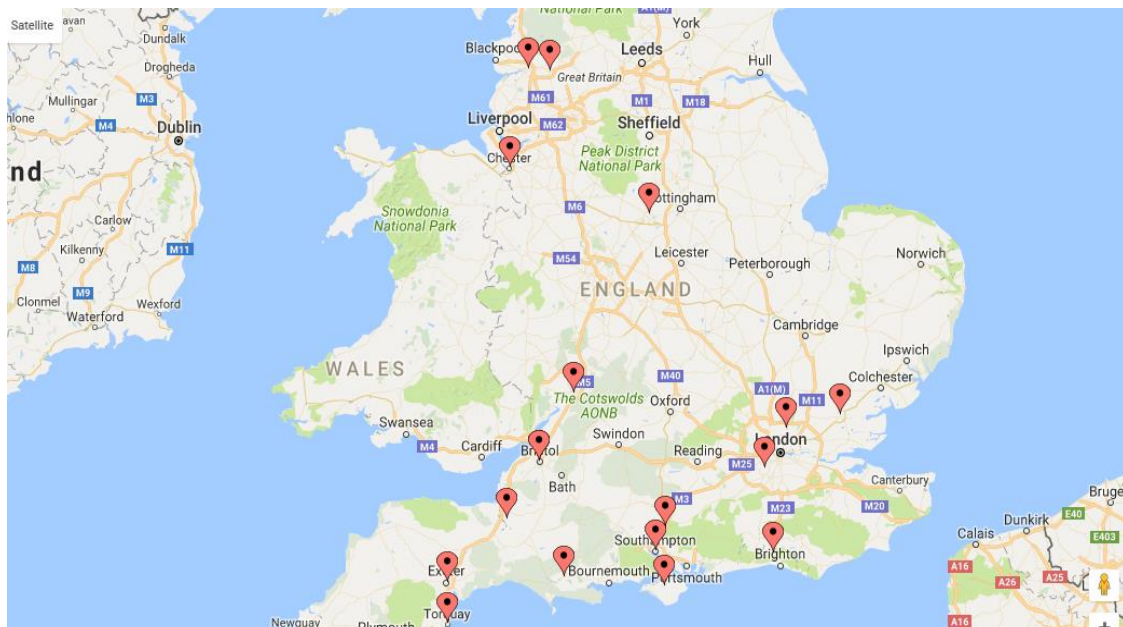
Answer Choices	Responses	
Not helpful at all	10.00%	1
Somewhat unhelpful	20.00%	2
Neither helpful or unhelpful	10.00%	1
Somewhat helpful	30.00%	3
Very helpful	30.00%	3
Total		10

Participants range in how helpful they found EP advice. Six respondents rated it as either “somewhat helpful” or “very helpful.” Two people felt EP involvement was “somewhat unhelpful.”

4.9.2 Geographical Spread

Some participants chose to disclose which LA they belonged to and this has helped to understand the geographical spread of respondents. I have plotted these locations on the map below:

Figure 9: A Map Showing the Geographical Spread of Questionnaire Respondents



The map indicates that, of those respondents who disclosed their location, most participants were from the south. The midlands area is largely blank, besides a family west of Nottingham. This map is not intended to show the prevalence of

home-education, it is solely included to demonstrate the spread of participants for this particular study. I did make contact with groups from social networking sites in the midlands, however, as the study was initially focused in the south-west of England these populations were targeted first. It might be that because the study had been advertised for a longer period in the south, more respondents had come forward.

4.9.3 Access to the Questionnaire

However, given that several of the home-educating families that I spoke to did not have a television, perhaps it is of greater significance due to my demographic. Although, all the families that I spoke to that did not have a television, did have at least one device that enabled them to access the internet, and therefore my questionnaire. As such, I do not think that anyone was excluded from participating and even those who were not avid users of technology, were able to find out about the questionnaire via word of mouth. Moreover, in several of the conversations I had during the case studies, social media and online groups is a method of communication which is frequently used by home-educators.

4.9.4 Four Main Error Types in Questionnaires

Electronic questionnaires, or online questionnaires as they are also known, according to Lumsden (2007) are often criticised for four main errors. These are as follows: coverage, non-response, sampling and measurement errors. Dillman (2000, p.9) describes coverage errors as not allowing all members of the survey population to have an equal chance of being sampled for participation. Equally, this is a criticism of the more traditional paper questionnaire. At the time of Dillman's work, there was much more of a divide between the digital and non-digital users. However, the internet is now far more accessible than it once was through a variety of devices including PCs, laptops, phones and tablets. Therefore, I think that this is less of an issue than it once was.

Non-response errors refer to individuals who fail to respond to the questionnaire invitation or those that abandon the questionnaire before completion. I did encounter both of these errors in my questionnaire, and accept that had a traditional questionnaire been used then the latter would have been less likely to occur. I could have been present and prompted the participant to complete the remaining questions. I raise two points here; firstly, how ethical it is to prompt a participant when they have expressed a choice to disengage with the questionnaire? Secondly, if we do successfully encourage a participant to continue beyond the point of their expressed lack of interest, how accurate will their responses be? Lumsden (2007) claims that one reason participants may abandon a questionnaire part way through, is because it is less clear how long the questionnaire is and how much time it may take. I ensured that I put on the first page of the questionnaire information which included an estimated time required for completion and this was based on feedback I collated from the pilot study.

The 'sampling error' refers to the potential to become misguided from surveying a sample rather than the whole population. Therefore, only having my questionnaire available online would limit it to home-educators who have access to technology and would mean that I miss out on data from home-educators who have no online capabilities. This is of some significance because families who have opted to be in a technology free household might have different reasons for not sending their children to school or have a more outdoors based learning programme, for example. Lumsden (2007) suggests that by limiting the questionnaire to this single online format might mean that some respondents may become 'alienated.' As well as having no online capabilities, those that do can become limited in what they can access. Lumsden (2007) provides reasons such as connection speeds, bandwidth limitations and browser configurations for this alienation. Again, I piloted the questionnaire and respondents used varying devices to access it with no reports of any issues. My questionnaire spread by word of mouth and there were no issues reported to me about people wanting to access the questionnaire but not having the facilities to do so.

Similarly, measurement errors are considered a result of the poor wording of questions and therefore inaccurate answers being obtained. The

questionnaire was piloted, however, it was not piloted amongst the target demographic. This was a conscious decision as I did not want to limit the quality data which could then be used in this project. Instead, I piloted the questionnaire amongst colleagues, academics, family and friends. The professions of the pilot group varied and included educational psychologists, nutritionists, charity directors and engineers. I felt that if the questions could be understood by people outside of the home-educating sphere, then they would be jargon free enough to be understood by those involved in the process. For the majority, this was true, however, I am aware that my questionnaire stirred some conversations amongst home-educators online which led to negative comments about it. I am unclear about exactly what was said, and as the group is not public did not have access to this discussion which I felt a little unfair as I could not defend my work. I heard about these discussions second hand from people who participated in the Phase Two of my project.

Participants completed questionnaires in their own time, from their own device. If a participant left the questionnaire they were unable to save their answers and return to it later. If I was to design a research project like this again, I would look at developing a feature which saved the progress a participant had made towards completion of the questionnaire so as they could pick up where they had left off at a later date. I had taken the decision to only make some questions compulsory, as I thought I would get a lower response rate if all of the questions were compulsory. This meant that on some questions participants could omit the question. Most commonly omitted questions were those around participants being part of a home-educating network, from question 18 to 22. I consider this to be a result of a measurement error as the wording could have been improved. With a greater knowledge of the variety of groups home-educators attend, ranging from Forest School to library sessions to home-education coffee mornings, I can see how these questions would be difficult to answer with just a specific group in mind.

Chapter Five: Findings: Phase Two

5.0 Overview

Phase Two of my study involved case studies of five families who currently, or had recently but no longer, home-educate. The geographical spread of families covered the Midlands as well as the south-west and south-east of England. The first two case studies were pilot cases during which I tested the arts-based tools I was using and the non-structured approach to conversations with parents.

I also have an observational element which was conducted at a Forest School in the south-west of England. Initially I had viewed this as an opportunity to recruit participants to the case studies; however, I ended up integrated, assisting in the activities and talking to parents. These illuminating conversations, along with my field notes have been included in this chapter as they were a significant part of my journey and contributed to my developing understanding of home-education.

5.1 Case Studies

In the narrative inquiry, I was looking beyond the face value of raw words on a page and attempting to capture the personalities behind the words. In part, this stems from some work I did for my undergraduate degree where critical discourse analysis (CDA) was a central component. The foundations of CDA are that linguistics alone are insufficient in understanding the content of what of being said. CDA moves away from analysing isolated sentences, phrases and words, in an attempt to view the conversation as a whole, a narrative. Wodak (2008) identifies seven dimensions that studies dealing with discourse have in common:

1. An interest in “naturally occurring” language.
2. A focus that goes beyond isolated words and sentences.
3. A focus beyond grammar, instead looking at actions and interactions.
4. Extensions to non-verbal communication; gestures, images, film, multimedia.
5. A focus on interactional moves and strategies.
6. The cultural, social and cognitive contexts of language use.

7. The analysis of a vast number of grammar and language usages, such as, anaphora, topics, macrostructures, turn-taking, politeness, argumentation and rhetoric.

Therefore, in order to identify such nuances, I chose to transcribe the conversations myself, with a focus on the above steps. Primarily, I was using '*The Listening Guide*' (Brown and Gilligan, 1992) to analyse the information collated from the case studies, however, I also used the seven principles of CDA as identified above as a way of constructing meaning from the narratives that I heard. Steps from '*The Listening Guide*' ensured that I paid particular attention to each individual voice, considering the imprint that the voice had left. Gilligan (1993) states that "voices leave their imprint on the human soul." As a researcher, I view part of my role as being able to share the impact the stories and voices, without diluting them so as they can leave a similar imprint on the reader's soul.

Another consideration was whether I should visit the families in person to conduct the evaluation and present them with their poems, or whether I should do this remotely via an electronic questionnaire or conference call software such as Skype. I took the decision to personally visit each family and only in instances where arranging a mutually convenient time was proving difficult, did I offer the completion of the evaluation from a distance. This was because I felt being present at the time when I shared the story with the young people was important and provided me with valuable information, through facial expressions and the general atmosphere that I may have missed if I relied on email correspondence. I also felt it was important to at least offer to bring some closure to the researcher/participant relationship, and doing this in person felt much more appropriate than an email. I am extremely grateful for each family taking the time to talk to me and wanted to reciprocate their efforts in going to see them and thanking them for their time.

As each case study was not run in entirely the same way, I have begun each section with an overview of the situation and the family's particular circumstances.

The case studies are written in the order in which they were conducted. As a researcher, I consider it paramount that I was, and continue to be, reflective

about my practice. I grew in confidence throughout the process and certainly feel that my skills were developing, meaning that the latter case studies were better run. This is not a reflection on the families, in contrast, about my skills in being able to facilitate the conversations and ensure the families were relaxed as opposed to facing them with difficult questions.

Finally, it should be noted that each family were asked to agree upon a pseudonym for their surname and the young people were asked to decide upon their own first name pseudonyms, allowing them to retain some ownership over their narratives.

5.2 Across Case Analysis

I chose to do within case analysis to begin with so that each narrative could be appreciated as the individual family's tale. However, I noticed that as I became more involved with the research, there were some repeated emergent themes, as well as some interesting contrasts. I have used Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach for thematic analysis to draw out these themes. I had considered grounded theory (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) however, my understanding is this style of research relies on a comparatively large number of participants in order to generate theory.

I followed the six-stage thematic analysis approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) in order to gain an overview of the recurring themes. The six stages are as follows:

1. I familiarised myself with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts, as well as listening to the audio several times. Potentially interesting features of the data which were relevant to my research questions were also identified.
2. I then generated initial codes which involved labelling features of the data with relevance to the research questions guiding the analysis. I did not want to just reduce the data and was keen to ensure the semantics were retained. I highlighted parts of the text which I felt were relevant to my research questions and then tried to label these initial codes. I often found that one quote contained multiple features so coded it as such.

3. The next stage involved searching for themes. The word 'searching' may be a little misleading as it suggests the themes are already in the data waiting to be found. Conversely, the themes were my constructions. The themes were meaningful patterns in the data that were relevant to my research questions. I collated all the coded data that was relevant to each theme.
4. I reviewed the themes to check that they were an accurate reflection of the data set. I began to consider the relationships between themes and whether it would be appropriate to combine themes together, split a theme into more specific themes or discard themes altogether.
5. Once I had established my themes, I then needed to name and define them clearly. I considered what the theme said about the complete data set and what I should label the theme to ensure it was concise but informative.
6. After my themes had been defined, I then needed to write up the analytic narrative. I aimed to tell a coherent story about my data.

I have included some extracts from my case study transcripts as examples of how the text was coded and themes identified. This extract is taken from my work with the Bennett family. The highlighted sections show my initial thinking regarding the codes. I had highlighted information relating to learning in yellow, information about relationships in green, learning environment in turquoise and information relating to ambitions in fuchsia.

Mum: Erm...and they become more self-sufficient every day.

Sam: Tuesdays...swimming. No that's Wednesday. Errr. Wednesday...

Interviewer: So, is it more you working from worksheets that your Mummy and Daddy make for you or...?

Sally: No, we have books over there.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Sally: So...

Sam: We do do worksheets.

Sally: History and art. We both...

Interviewer: And how do you know them? Are they special teachers for those subjects?

Sally and Sam: Err...well...(pauses)

Interviewer: Or are they friends?

Sally: Our History teacher is from church and she used to be a History teacher at school. ...teaches us History from the beginning. Like from the Stone Age to now.

Interviewer. Okay.

Sam: In Art we...basically...we do the History of Art.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Sam: At the beginning...and then we do proper Art.

Interviewer: Like making stuff yourself?

Sam: Yeah.

Sally: And painting stuff.

Sam: Yeah, mainly painting stuff.

Interviewer: And does she come here just for you guys are does she have some of your friends over too...?

Sally: Erm...usually we just go to her house. We do do like...er...music with some of our home-school friends. Erm...

Sam: Do I?

Sally: Yeah (*mutters to Sam*). Yeah, we do music together. We are setting up like a home-school choir or something like that. So...

Table 9

Quote	Code	Theme
"They become more self sufficient everyday."	Parental opinion. Independence.	Parent-child relationships. Ambitions.
"Tuesdays...swimming. No that's Wednesdays."	Routine. Sport.	Learning.
"We have books over there."	Learning style.	Learning.
"We do do worksheets."	Learning style/activities.	Learning.
"History and art."	Topics learned.	Learning, home-education.

“Our History teacher is from church.”	Relationships. Learning from a known/trusted person. Religion.	Lifestyle. Learning.
“She used to be a History teacher at our school.”	Relationships. Learning from a known/trusted person. Links to previous learning environment, school.	Home-education. School.
“She teaches us History from the beginning.”	Learning topics. Not constrained to a curriculum.	Home-education. Shared values/beliefs.
“We do the History of Art.”	Learning topics. Subjects not learned in isolation. Not constrained to a curriculum.	Home-education. Shared values/beliefs.
“At the beginning...and then we do proper Art.”	Practical learning.	Learning.
“We just go to her house.”	Relationships. Learning environment – in teacher’s home.	Learning environment.
“We do music....with our home-school friends.”	Learning Topic. Socialisation. Learning is structured and in groups.	Friendships.

"We do music together."	Learning in a group.	Friendships.
"We are setting up like a home-school choir."	Socialisation. Young people being given responsibilities.	Ambitions. Lifestyle.

As a result of this analysis, I have produced a series of thematic maps to summarise the key themes. These can be found in the Appendices (pages 241-243).

5.3 Case One: The Knowles Family (Pilot Study)

The Knowles were the first family to become involved in my research. I certainly feel that I was somewhat inexperienced as this stage, and I think that my skills as a researcher have developed along throughout the research process.

Mr. Knowles expressed an interest in participating in the research through an online advertisement and it should be noted that he also has links with the university at which I am studying. As with the majority of participants, he was a little sceptical to begin with and wanted to know more about what the research entailed. He agreed to meet me to discuss the research further. Although this was not an agreement to participate, it was the first offer I had received from someone that was willing to meet me in person so this felt like huge progress.

I met with Mr. Knowles in July 2016 at a building at the university to provide him with further details about my research. We talked about my difficulties in recruiting families to the study as he mentioned some animosity that he had faced after sharing information about my research to an online social networking home-education group. He said that people were not keen to participate in research because they were suspicious about what the findings would be used for. People that were keen to be involved, did not want to show an interest publicly as this could lead to them being ostracised from the group. From this conversation, I began to understand a little more about the in- and out-groups of home-education. It reminded me of childhood clubs that you could only belong to if you knew the secret password! In this instance, you could only belong if you were a home-educator and, it would appear, if you were willing to live with and abide by the unwritten rules, including not talking to researchers.

Mr. Knowles considered his relative lack of scepticism to be due to his involvement with the university and therefore an understanding of the rigorous ethical checks the study goes through before being approved. He also commented that he was relatively new to home-education (having one child, a daughter, aged five) so he had not had bad experiences with researchers and was, perhaps, naïve. With him being new to the world of home-education too, he had a shared understanding of the difficulties in being able to immerse yourself in something when there are so many barriers in your way.

Having met me and had the opportunity to discuss my research further, Mr. Knowles agreed to meet me again, this time with his daughter, who has chosen the pseudonym Daisy. I had arranged to meet Mr. Knowles and Daisy at a coffee shop in October 2016, however, as it was rather busy, Mr. Knowles suggested we go to a university building which I agreed to. This is the only one of the case studies to have taken place outside of the home.

I was aware just how nervous five-year old Daisy was. To begin with she would barely speak and she wanted her father to remain in the room with us. I agreed to this and Mr. Knowles sat in a corner at his computer whilst Daisy and I were seated at a table on the other side of the room. The room was small enough for the conversation to be heard by all parties. Given Daisy's apprehension about participation, I took the decision not to audio record this interview as I felt it would be unethical to place further pressures on her. As this was my first case study, I was unsure how long it would last but it came to a natural end (when Daisy lost concentration and said she was ready for lunch!), lasting approximately thirty minutes in total.

I had intended to work with the young people in the case studies alone, thinking that I would get more of an honest account from them. In this instance, I could see that the presence of Daisy's father was absolutely necessary in making her feel comfortable. To begin with Daisy's father sat at the table with us and I introduced the first activity to her which was to create her 'ideal self in her ideal learning environment.' Daisy's creation can be seen in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Daisy's Model of her Ideal Self in her Ideal Learning Environment



As Daisy became more engrossed in the activity and more relaxed in my company, Mr. Knowles retreated to his computer situated on the opposite side of the room. He listened to our conversation, sometimes offering his own input or prompting Daisy to remember things.

At the time, I remember thinking of this as a negative, as I wanted the content that was being discussed to come from Daisy. However, reframing this situation and thinking about it more positively, it highlighted the discrepancies between what Mr. Knowles considered important and what Daisy considered important. Having Mr. Knowles in the room also gave me an opportunity to observe the relationship and dynamic between them. This was arguably the most striking observation I made. Mr. Knowles' interactions with Daisy did not feel as though it was a parent-child relationship, more of a friend-friend relationship, almost as though they were equals.

For example, when Daisy made her ideal learning environment, she made herself on a horse because she thought that she learnt a lot when she was outside at riding lessons. Daisy is of mixed race origin and she was keen to match the play dough colours to her skin complexion and hair colour accurately. She asked her father what he thought and instead of being directive, he reflected the question back to Daisy and allowed her space to think. I was impressed with Daisy's response that she needed "auburn" for her hair. The

space and respect that Mr. Knowles gave Daisy was extremely powerful, especially given how young Daisy is.

My work with Daisy felt quite experimental. The tasks that I had envisaged my participants doing, such as mapping out their educational journey and transitions did not apply as she had only ever been home-educated. I asked her to think about key learning moments and tried to map these with Daisy, but given her age she could not think of any. She said she probably learnt lots as a baby but she could not remember what these were and did not know how to represent them in a pictorial form. At this stage, I realised I needed to be more flexible, take more of a naturalistic approach and see where Daisy wanted to take the conversation. From the moment that I did this, information and opportunities for observing conversations between Daisy and her father emerged. Daisy talked about her friends at horse riding and topics of interest such as 'The Big Bang Theory.' Daisy felt that she spent a lot of time with her mother at home, or at various groups such as at libraries and scheduled activities. Her father intervened, saying that they spent lots of time outdoors on bicycle rides together.

The lifestyle that was led seemed a little alternative and this is where I found it difficult to remain objective. Mr. Knowles said that the family do not have a television, grew their own vegetables and were vegans. This surprised me, but upon reflection, this is perhaps a normal occurrence for the home-educating community. I have kept the label of alternative because I think the majority of society now have a television and most people are not vegan.

Daisy was given the choice of what to eat for lunch following her work with me and she chose a falafel. Again, I thought this was probably not the typical choice of most five year olds.

5.3.1 Summary of Themes Emerging from The Knowles Family

- Parent-child relationship – respect, non-directive.
- Alternative lifestyle – no television, vegan.
- Researcher reflections – adopting a more fluid approach to the process.
Being a facilitator, not a director.

5.4 Case Two: The Sanders Family (Pilot Study)

Following my work with the Knowles, I was put in touch with their friend, Mrs. Sanders, who said that she was happy for me to come and visit her and her eldest two children at the family home. I met with Lily (6 years old) and Jacob (4 years old) in November 2016. Both children are home-educated and neither have been to school before. They have a younger brother who is not yet of school age.

It had been rather difficult to arrange a mutually convenient date with the Sanders family. On the day that I visited the Sanders, they were due to attend a group cooking session which was to be led by Mrs. Sanders. I spent about an hour and a half with the family which included the work I facilitated with the children and an informal discussion with Mrs. Sanders.

I had my dictaphone with me so as I could audio record the session, but similarly to my experience with the Knowles, it did not feel appropriate to use it. Both children were relatively young and this time it felt even more intrusive as I was in their home. I think this is also a reflection on my skills as a researcher at this point in the project which were still in the early stages of development. It was my first involvement with a family within their home in the capacity of a researcher and so I needed to adjust to this dynamic.

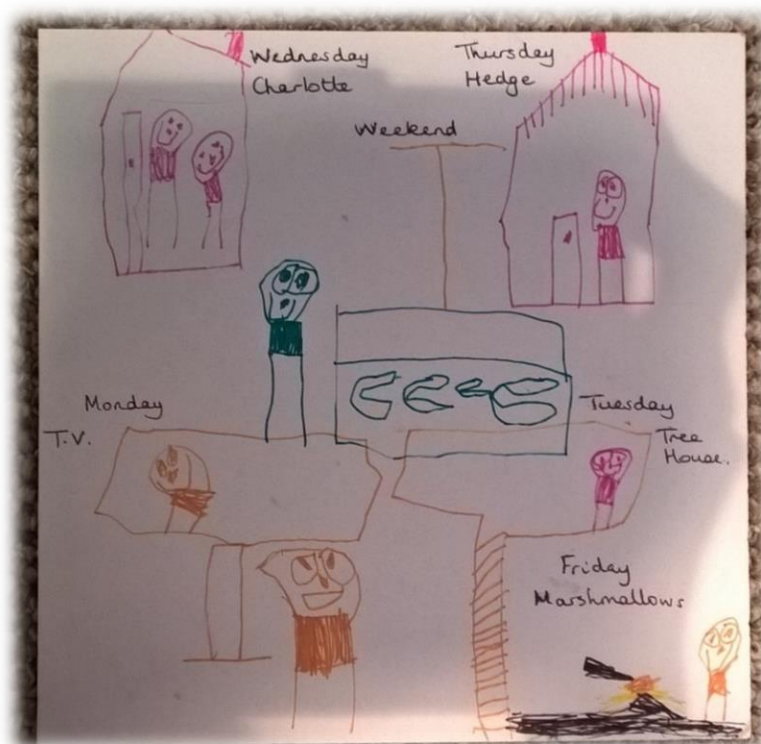
There was a lot of activity within the house and I would describe it as a happy household that was full of positive energy. When I arrived, Mrs. Sanders was feeding her youngest child whilst Lily and Jacob were playing upstairs. The children came downstairs to greet me. It was somewhat chaotic and I suggested we went to a space where there was a table so as we had a surface to work. I sat with the children in the living room at a table. Mr. Sanders was working from home and Mrs. Sanders popped in and out of the living room to observe what we were doing but she was largely preoccupied with caring for her youngest child. I made notes throughout the session and immediately after leaving the property, sat in my car and made more extensive field notes.

As I had done with Daisy, I asked the children to think about a typical week and draw an image to represent something that they do on each day. I was interested in the sibling relationship which seemed very strong. Lily said to me that she thought Jacob did not understand the task and she tried to help him. I explained that it was okay for them to draw different images as I wanted to see

what was important to each of them individually. They worked simultaneously on the task at the table together and I felt as though having a familiar person at the table was beneficial in maintaining a sense of normality, just as I had found with Daisy wanting her father to remain in the room. Lily was very confident and, given his age, I thought Jacob engaged with me very well too.

I have included Jacob's image which outlines his typical week and this can be seen in Figure 11. Jacob chose to draw him carrying sweets at the weekend as this was important to him. Mrs. Sanders explained that at weekends the children are allowed more treats than during the week. Lily said that weekends usually revolve around family time and doing things together. She said that sometimes they go to friends' houses, stay at home and watch a film or go to the beach together.

Figure 11: Jacob's Representation of his Typical Week



Monday was described by Lily as the day that the children do the most work. They complete various tasks on the laptop and typically work in the living room. The children said that they cover a range of subjects including Maths, English, Science and History. Lily commented that she enjoys her learning. Jacob drew

a television to represent Monday. He mentioned that they watch some programmes such as Paw Patrol which are more so for his younger brother.

On Tuesdays the children attend a specific home-education group which is based outdoors and is based on the philosophy of natural learning. Jacob represented this group with a tree-house and Lily drew a pirate ship. Given the children's age, they were not terribly descriptive about the activities they do there, however, they both liked this group.

The children tend to do different activities on Wednesdays. Jacob used to regularly see his friend Charlotte but this has become less regular now that she has started pre-school. Lily said that she has a good friend from her dancing club.

Lily attends a Christian Home-Education Group but this is a county wide group so she only tends to go to the activities if they are local. She explained that the previous week was a local activity where the children went to a pottery cafe and painted various items. Lily said that she painted a plate for her friend at her dance club.

5.4.1 Summary of Themes Emerging from The Sanders Family

- Sibling relationships - Lily supported Jacob in the tasks and elaborated on his points when he seemed unable to.
- A love for learning – learning was not a chore for these children, it was something they embraced.
- Confidence – both children exuded confidence. I was impressed with how readily they conversed with me.
- High energy.
- Creative.

5.5 Case Three: The Bennett Family

The Bennetts were recruited through a contact of my mother who works at a school. A friend of one of my mother's colleagues, who in fact he completed teacher training with, was now home-educating and expressed an interest in participating in my research. The Bennetts live in the Midlands and are a family of six; mother, father, three boys and one girl. Two of the children are below school age, so just the elder two, pseudonyms Sam and Sally were spoken to in relation to the research. I first visited the Bennetts in January 2017 and again in February 2017. Both of my visits to the Bennetts were in the late afternoon due to the distance that I was travelling and therefore, it was around bedtime for the two youngest children. The family were very accommodating and welcomed me nonetheless.

On my first visit, the youngest children had just had dinner and when I began working with Sam and Sally, their parents left their room to put the youngest two to bed. Mr. Bennett came down soon after as he was preparing dinner for the rest of the family and I. We were sat at the table in the living room which was open plan, so Mr Bennett could see and hear everything from the kitchen. Despite this, it did not feel as though Mr Bennett was having a large influence over proceedings. The children would have been aware of his presence but at no time did Mr. Bennett interfere or share his views.

As mentioned, Mr. Bennett was preparing dinner for the family and I, so after I had completed the visual arts activities with the children, I stopped the audio recording and dinner was served. Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, Sam, Sally and myself were around the dinner table and some very interesting conversations emerged.

At the time, I took the decision to stop the audio recording when dinner was being served as it did not feel appropriate to have the dictaphone out at the table. Part of me regrets this decision as there were some interesting comments shared, such as the family's wish to be part of their children's upbringing and not just hand them over to an institution. However, I stand by my decision to make the family feel at ease by the removal of the dictaphone because I think this enabled the parents to feel more open about what they shared.

In comparison to the other families that participated in the study, personally I would consider the Bennetts to be the least 'alternative.' Both Sally and Sam

had attended school, Sally, the elder of the two completed Year 5 and was about to go into Year 6 when she began home-education. Sam completed Year 4 and was about to go into Year 5 when he began. This is the family's second year of home-educating.

Both parents are former teachers and Mr. Bennett is still involved in the education system, working for the governing body of Catholic schools. Mrs. Bennett completed a PhD, so was understanding about the demands of my own research.

5.5.1 Analytic Process

'*The Listening Guide*' itself states that it should not be rigidly followed, it merely offers "a pathway into relationship rather than a fixed framework for interpretation." (Brown and Gilligan, 1992, p.22)

Step One involves "listening for the plot." A large part of this was done when I collected the information; my thoughts and feelings that were recorded in my field notes immediately after meeting the family. Listening to the recordings again, for the purposes of transcription, provided me with an opportunity to micro-analyse the conversations as I had the privilege of being able to pause and consider what was being said, as well as replaying sections. Brown and Gilligan (1992) advise that a listener's response to the interview is recorded. Therefore, at the top of each of the 'I poems,' I have included my response.

I have included my part of my listener response to Sally's narrative as an example (The full response and responses to the other participants' narratives can be found in the Appendices):

"I found Sally's reflections very mature and was impressed with some of the words that she used. Such as 'ambitious,' 'dystopia' and 'exasperated.' I noticed that she raised the notion of 'responsibility' a few times, both in terms of her learning and in terms of her role in the family. What I particularly liked was that this sense of responsibility appeared to come from herself and it was not a role which had been imposed on her. For example, she talked about wanting to cook a weekly meal for the family. Sally was able to identify her strengths and weaknesses, such as her talents for playing musical instruments and musical theatre. She noted that she was working on her ICT skills, but felt that her brother, Sam, was better at this than herself. I

was struck by Sally's brief reflections about being bullied at school, but perhaps more so by her new found sense of empowerment. She considers herself as having more confidence now. I felt that Sally has begun to feel more settled in her home-educated environment and is able to develop the skills that she needs for her future. She is certainly an ambitious and tenacious individual who wants to go on to do a plethora of exciting careers."

Step Two: The second step focuses in on the use of the first-person pronoun "I" to construct what Elizabeth Debold (1990) labelled "I poems." There are two key purposes for this step; the first of which is in drawing the researcher's attention to the participant's first person voice, identifying "distinctive cadences and rhythms." Secondly, to understand how the individual talks about himself or herself. Being able to tune yourself into a specific individual's voice and listening to what the person knows about themselves, partially distancing ourselves from the narrative and objectifying the situation (Brown and Gilligan, 1992).

According to 'The Listening Guide,' there are two rules that govern the 'I poems.' They involve identifying each statement beginning with an I and looking at the accompanying verb, plus the important subsequent words. The other rule is that the statements must remain in the order in which they were spoken. The poem often naturally falls into stanzas but in instances where they do not, the statements can be broken into the emergent themes. 'The Listening Guide' explores the possible presence of other voices and allowing the researcher to decide if they need to be included. I feel that there was a definite sense of 'them' and 'us' in the Bennetts' narrative. I did not want this to be lost so I have incorporated "them" and "you" statements on the right hand side of the page and any "we" and "us" comments are centralised. "I" statements are on the left hand side of the page. I have ensured that the order of statements have been retained. All of the I Poems can be found in the Appendix but I include a section from Sally's I Poem, friendship, as an example:

Friendship

I have a friend called Alicia

I see her there.

I didn't go to school with them.

There's this one girl...who I got on with really well.

We, erm, kinda didn't argue that much.

We never really split up or anything.

When I look back, friends could be a bit ropey.

I was bullied quite a bit at school so...

I have loads and loads of friends across the country.

We get to know people.

We usually go with the Christian Home-School Group.

We meet up with them.

I don't think I've met anyone my age actually.

I do have a few older ones but most of them are younger.

They're quite mature.

I was bullied like three times.

I didn't think of it as bullying at the time.

Now, I realise it was.

I am aware that The Listening Guide and formation of I Poems is not a conventional method of analysis and in some ways this is why I was attracted to it. The impression I received from the families was one of rejecting societal preferences in favour of another, less popular, but arguably equally effective method. By adopting 'The Listening Guide' as my model of analysis, I too was rejecting the arguably more conventional thematic analysis for a less common practice which felt fitting. Aside from this, analysing the narratives in this way allowed me to focus on each individual's voice and it enabled me to have something concrete to share with the young people when I returned.

By attending to each voice, I could focus on research questions four and five which were about the thoughts and emotions young people and their parents had around home-education. It was important that I separated out the views of the young people and their parents from the general plot of the narrative being told. The plot was important in understanding each family's journey to their current educational point but in terms of thinking about the views held by my participants *The Listening Guide* helped me to clearly identify these. Moreover, by focusing on pronouns such as "we" and "us" it helped me to understand

whether the participants felt their views were shared within the family. In some cases, participants used the words “they” and “them” to describe school attendees, indicating that school attendees were a completely different group to themselves.

Emerging from Sally’s ‘I Poem’ were the broad themes of friendship, her skills, home-education and the future. Sally reflected that she was bullied at school and felt that now she was home-educated she was growing in confidence. She also commented that her brother, Sam, was bullied and he too is much more confident now he is home-educated.

Sally is ambitious and has lots of plans for her future, including being a missionary. Similarly, emerging from Sam’s ‘I Poem’ was an excitement for the future and a curiosity regarding a range of topics including ICT and the History of Art.

The Bennett family felt that the curriculum in schools was fairly restrictive and did not encourage a thirst for learning. They mentioned that they ask their children at the beginning of each academic year to write a list of questions that they hope to find the answers to by the end of the year. The parents commented that the first time they did this activity with the children after removing them from the school system, the children listed just a few questions. However, they now write vast amounts of questions covering several sides of A4 and have to be told to stop. The parents felt that at the beginning the children’s curiosity was still operating within the narrow parameters that school imposed. After a period of home-education, those parameters have widened and the children are showing more of an interest in the world.

5.5.2 The Bennett Family's Pen Portrait

The Bennett Family

Family of six: Mother, father, three boys and one girl.
Sam – 8 years old.
Sally – 11 years old.
The Bennetts live in the Midlands.

Background

Sam and Sally both attended school. Sally completed Year 5 and was about to go into Year 6 when she began home-education. Sam completed Year 4 and was about to go into Year 5 when he began.
It is the family's second year of home-educating.

Points Arising from Observations

- Children had specific responsibilities and roles within the home.
- Curiosity about the world.
- Religion appeared to be important to this family. Attendance at home-educating Christians group and summer camp. Regular involvement at the Church.
- Seemed to have a structured approach to home-education; covering similar topics to school using worksheets and books as well as outings.
- Parents assisted with the learning.
- Family utilised friends and tutors for subjects such as the History of Art and music.

Themes Emerging From the Transcripts

- School friendships could be "ropey."
- Both had far more friends now they were home-educated.
- Both were bullied when they were at school.
- Home-education was helping the children's self-confidence.
- Ambitious.
- High aspirations.

Researcher Reflections

- Sibling dynamics: was the younger sibling overshadowed by the elder sibling in this conversation?

5.6 Case Four: The Peralta Family

The Peraltas were recruited through a contact who works in the outdoor pursuits sector, who knew the family from a Forest School. This contact had informed Forest School attendees about my research and had asked anyone who was interested to pass their contact details onto him, which were in turn passed to me.

The Peraltas live in the south-east of England and this is particularly significant as during my conversation with them, they considered why home-education is more prevalent in some areas than others. They made reference to London and the surrounding areas which is why I considered it necessary to include details about their location, without using specifics, and therefore continuing to protect their identity.

The family consists of two daughters, Sigourney aged 13 and Christie aged 10; and their mother and father. They live together in a family home. Mrs. Peralta stays at home with the children and Mr. Peralta works in insurance in London, commuting from the family home. I first visited this family in February 2017. One of the girls was ready for my arrival, but the younger of the two, Christie, was still in bed. Mrs. Peralta asked if she could join us at the table to observe and Mr. Peralta stood in the kitchen throughout. It was an open plan room so he was visible and, he became involved, adding his views to the conversation at various points. Christie joined Sigourney, Mrs. Peralta and I at the table not long after my arrival. Sigourney had been at a sleepover the night before and she makes reference to this several times.

As Sigourney is the eldest of the participants across the case studies, this affected the choice of visual media I took with me. I felt that the children may consider themselves too mature for play dough, so instead took some beads, thread and other craft materials with me for them to choose from. The girls wanted to use the beads which had letters on and I set them the activity of creating some sort of jewellery with a word on it to sum up their home-education experience. Below, is Figure 12, Christie's creation:

Figure 12: Christie's Choice of Word to Describe Her Home-Education Experience



Her choice of word was 'weird' and she had difficulty spelling this. Her mother helped her to spell it out on a piece of paper first. Clearly, Christie's vowels are in the incorrect order and I chose not to correct this as she was working more closely with her mother on the project and I was working alongside Sigourney. This was purely due to our positions around the table. I thought that Mrs. Peralta might correct Christie's spelling, but she did not. Perhaps symbolic of the relaxed approach the family takes with their children and their keenness to avoid "shaming" their children.

"Shaming" was a topic that arose in the conversation a couple of times. Mrs. Peralta said, "We never shame our children. If they don't want to carry on with something, we don't shame them." This was in reference to when the children do not want to persist with a certain topic of learning or activity, but I felt that perhaps it was applicable here. Mrs. Peralta was maybe reluctant to correct Christie's spelling for fear of shaming her in front of an audience. Although not necessarily a concept solely used by Mrs. Peralta and home-educators, the level of importance that she placed on it is perhaps what set her apart from others. I perceived it to be important to Mrs. Peralta due to the frequency of her mentioning it and the length at which she described it. For Mrs. Peralta it seemed that she viewed not 'shaming' her children as being different to the way children are treated at school. She talked about not persisting with an activity and there being no shame in that, conversely school attending children must

persist with a topic regardless of whether they have an interest in it or have a talent in that area because that is what the curriculum dictates.

There was discussion around Christie's choice of word, as 'weird' can have both negative and positive connotations. The discussion around her choice of word was not led by me, instead, led by Mrs. Peralta and Sigourney. In transcribing the information, I realised just how little I needed to speak in order to facilitate the conversation. At the beginning of the conversation, I led with questions and probes, but as it progressed it felt as though there was a shift and the family felt comfortable to open up and recount various tales without much need for my questions. At times, it seems as though Mrs. Peralta feels that she must relay every single activity the children do to justify that she is doing a good job. In my opinion, this seemed to be a way of reassuring herself that she had made the right educational choices for her children, as a mother, and indeed with convincing me that the children were learning. Mrs. Peralta talks about an experience she had in a supermarket where the cashier had been somewhat negative to the family because Sigourney told the cashier that she was home-educated.

Mrs. Peralta said,

"She just went, "What?! I don't agree with that. What about the socialisation?" And I then sort of...I was in quite a buoyant mood anyway and I said, "Well it's fine, she does Forest School, she does Rainbows." Or whatever it was at the time. I listed them all, der, der, der, der, der. But the woman was insistent. She just went, "Nah. Nah. Nah. Nah. There's no way, don't be ridiculous." And she was just dismissive. Harsh, wicked almost."

When I heard about this experience, I began to understand Mrs. Peralta's eagerness to inform me of the positive opportunities her girls are provided with. Thinking more widely, I also began to think about why it had been so difficult to recruit participants. Perhaps they too were worried I was going to be critical and dismissive of their efforts.

In considering the word that Christie had chosen for her necklace, Sigourney asked, "What do you mean? Like different in a cool way? Or like weirdddd? (Laughs) *Weirdddd.*" Christie seems unable to express exactly what she means

but she does say, “I like weird.” This leads me to think she likes home-education if she is using a descriptor which she also likes.

Sigourney chose the word “free.” Interestingly, as I asked the girls to think of their words, I simultaneously thought about what word I would choose with the knowledge that I had collated over my research journey. I did not vocalise my thoughts, or that I too was participating in the activity, but my choice of word was also ‘free.’ Sigourney remarks that she chose free because, “it just feels really relaxed I guess. Free-range chickens!” Reading the transcript makes me wish that I had probed Sigourney further on what she meant with “free-range chickens.” I think it is a superb analogy which, in hindsight, was worth further exploration. However, Christie misheard Sigourney, thinking that her choice of word was “freak,” so she swiftly directs the conversation elsewhere and the moment is lost.

Following the format set out by ‘*The Listening Guide*,’ I created ‘I poems’ for each of the participants just as I did for the Bennett family. Initially, I had intended to create these just for the young people but in this case study, Mrs. Peralta had played a significant role in the interactions and, at times, directed the conversation. I considered her contributions too rich to be dismissed so took the decision to create an ‘I poem’ for her as well. I debated whether to create one too for Mr. Peralta, but his contributions to the discussions were far less frequent which would have made grouping his statements into stanzas very difficult. Furthermore, I felt that by his physical positioning, behind a work surface in the kitchen, he had almost signalled that he wanted to be slightly detached from the process. For these reasons I created ‘I poems’ just for Sigourney, Christie and Mrs. Peralta. The full poems can be found in the Appendix.

This extract Sigourney’s ‘I Poem’ is about her relationship with her younger sibling:

Sibling Relationship

I have to live with *her*!

I mean some sisters don’t, but me and Hettie, we annoy each other.

We fight.

I *don’t* punch her.

She punches me but...

We delicately fight.

We don't properly fight like because that's...

Well I'm over ten so I'm liable for my actions.

So, I can't punch.

But I don't think violence at any age is acceptable.

If a baby murdered someone, it's still the baby's fault so you should put it in
baby prison.

I don't think violence is okay for anyone.

I just have a strong belief in that area.

I think serial killers should be electrocuted and then fed to polar bears.

I particularly liked this section of the poem as I feel it encapsulates Sigourney well. Her sense of playfulness and youthful innocence to begin with as she comments that her sister annoys her and they fight, followed by her opinions on wider issues. She clearly has strong morals and beliefs, as she identifies herself with, "I just have a strong belief in that area." She talked about serial killers being fed to polar bears, reasoning that polar bears are dying out due to global warming. This suggests some level of awareness of world issues. Sigourney reinforces much later on into the conversation when she talks about politics and her views on Donald Trump.

Similarly to my conversation with the Bennetts, when listening to the audio, I realised just how much the conversation had been dominated by the elder sibling. Yet, I felt the children been talked to separately, the quality of information would have been less rich as they bounced ideas off each other. Often the information would be relayed by the elder sibling, but the idea had originated from the younger one. As this was not an experiment, there was no control group of non home-educated families, but I wonder how this sibling dynamic might compare.

5.6.1 The Peralta Family's Pen Portrait

The Peralta Family

Mother, father, and two daughters.

Sigourney – 13 years old.

Christie – 10 years old.

Background

Christie has always been home-educated. Sigourney attended school briefly in Reception but has been home-educated ever since.
Mrs Peralta stays at home with the children and Mr. Peralta works in insurance in London.

Points Arising from Observations

- Relaxed about timings and appointments. (e.g. Christie was still in bed when I arrived.)
- Parental involvement was important to the Peraltas. Both Mr. and Mrs. Peralta were present throughout my visit.
- General knowledge – children seemed to have a broad general knowledge.
- Subject specific knowledge is dependent on whether they have an interest in the subject or not.

Themes Emerging From the Transcripts

- Mrs. Peralta referred to “shaming.” She said she did not want to “shame” her children if they did not wish to continue with an activity.
- The family talked about there being an “abundance of opportunities.” They believe that everything is available in abundance and children will learn to self-regulate better if they learn their limits for themselves.
- Parental choices were well researched, although sometimes instinctive such as their decisions to “sling” and “co-sleep” with their children.

Researcher Reflections

- Sibling Relationship. The elder sibling was much more vocal than the younger, but short statements made by the younger sibling would trigger a longer narrative by Sigourney.

5.7 Case Five: The Simmonds Family

The Simmonds family were different to the other families that were involved in my research as they were the only ones to no longer be home-educating. I recruited a snowball sample and my work spread through word of mouth. Through a contact at a Forest School, which the Simmonds still attended for extra-curricular activities, the Simmonds expressed interest in participating. Given the difficulties I had in recruiting participants, I was grateful for their offer and thought their involvement in both home-education and school added a valuable dimension and comparison. The Simmonds comprised of Ms. Simmonds and her two children, Ella (10 years old) and Ollie (7 years old).

My work with the Simmonds family took place in their family home in the south-east of England. In fact, they live in the same village as the Peraltas who they are friends with. There had been some issues over the scheduled time for me to work with Ella and Ollie, as Ollie had had a football match and Ella was involved in a pantomime. After some re-arranging and postponing, I managed to meet in February 2017. When I arrived the children were dressed casually, in 'onesies,' and there was a relaxed atmosphere in the house. This house felt more like a home rather than a hub for creativity and learning which is the sense I got from the other families' houses.

Ollie began Reception class the term after his fifth birthday and so was not home-educated for a period longer than is considered the 'norm.' Ella, however, joined school at the beginning of Year Two. Ollie was given the option to participate in the project but he chose not to, so my work focuses on Ella and Ms. Simmonds.

I begin by thinking about how Ella came to conclude her home-education journey and start a new path at school. Both Ella and Ms. Simmonds state that it was Ella's choice and they recall the time when Ella voiced this, which is illustrated in the selected section of the transcript as follows:

"Ms. Simmonds: You wouldn't have had to go 'til Year Three really, but, it was...you just said one day, "I want to go to school."

Ella: Like a week before term started.

Interviewer: Oh right, what made you say that?

Ms. Simmonds: ...And we needed to get her a place and uniforms and things...

Ella: I don't know 'cos I had loads of friends that were in there..."

Clearly, friends seemed to be a driving force behind Ella's decision to go to school, although much like the young people from the previous case studies, Ella reflects on the wide and varied friendships that she had when she was home-educated. Ms. Simmonds explains that Ella remains friends with some of children from the home-education community. Ella reflects that she thinks that being home-educated has given her confidence to interact with young people of varying ages. For example, she says that she has friends at the local secondary school and children younger than her which she said she probably would have felt less confident in talking to if she had not had her home-education start to life.

On the surface, it appears that it was solely a child-led decision to enter the school system, however, as my conversation with the Simmonds developed, it emerged that there were situational factors that also influenced this. Namely the separation of Ms. Simmonds and her husband. Ms. Simmonds commented that the financial implications of the separation meant that she needed to enter employment and that home-education was no longer an option.

Ella and Ms. Simmonds discuss the separation and Ms. Simmonds explains that it was Ella's father's decision to home-educate. She says, "I think it was his decision initially. Yeah, well it came more from him..." A verse of Ella's I Poem is about her father and provides an insightful summary of her thoughts about him.

My Father

He hated school.

He hated, he absolutely hated school.

That's why he never comes to parents evening.

He's amazing.

He didn't feel like school was teaching him anything.

My Dad lives in London.

He doesn't like school.

But I think that he accepts that we have to go.

We have kinda got across to him that we do actually learn stuff.
Ella's perception is that her father disliked school and his experiences have contributed to the decision regarding her own education.

Aside from home-education, Ella and Ms. Simmonds described some lifestyle choices that the family have made. These also formed a verse of Ella's I Poem.

Lifestyle Choices

We never used to have any electronical devices.

We've never had a telly and its torture.

Three-year-old boy. A THREE – YEAR – OLD – BOY has a telly in his room.
I haven't got a telly in my whole house.
I was so pleased with my Kindle.
I'm not allowed a phone until I'm sixteen.

You mean you used to have a telly in this house?

Why didn't you keep it?!

We watch *Strictly*!

We never watch a film together, except for Sing. Sing was good...and Moana.
My ninth birthday was the first time I'd been to the cinema.

We never used to have plasters either.

We've never had Calpol.

We've never had anything like that.

For Ella, not having a television is something she dislikes. Although it does seem that these decisions the family had made early on in life are not totally embedded, rigid beliefs. For example, although the family do not have a television, they have begun to watch programmes online. As a television licence is now needed for catch-up television, Ms. Simmonds says that they now also have the opportunity to watch programmes live, hence they watched *Strictly Come Dancing*. Although neither of them articulated it, I wonder whether them beginning to watch television and beginning to have trips to the cinema have

some correlation to Ella starting school. When socialising with like-minded individuals, I imagine it is easier to uphold strong values about not wanting to engage with technology. However, once entering the school system and the mainstream world, perhaps it is unsurprising that mainstream activities are now also filtering into their lives.

I also wonder if slight shift in lifestyle choices are linked to Ella's father no longer being in the family home. Certainly, on the topic of school, it seemed that he was the dominant voice against the system. Could it be that he was also the driving force behind the other lifestyle choices too? I would have liked to ask these questions to find out more about these seemingly changing values but I did not feel I had the right to ask, nor did I want to be too directive. Ella and Ms. Simmonds were directing the conversation where they wanted it to go which was positive as it was how I had intended these sessions to be run.

Ms. Simmonds did uphold some of these values, which she described as 'alternative,' herself. For example, she said that her children were not vaccinated. She explains:

"I've never been one to worry about what people think anyway. I'm not, well we've made some extreme decisions, you know like not vaccinating your child. Some people will never admit that to other people, but erm, I'm not out there like shouting-."

Ms. Simmonds lack of concern regarding how others perceive her choices caused me to think about one of the emergent themes from the Peralta family. One of the themes was around "justifying their decisions to others." Mrs. Peralta no longer felt the need to do this, however, she had recounted incidents which had led her to this conclusion. I thought about whether Ms. Simmonds may have encountered similar situations which had resulted in her not worrying about what others thought or if it was an innate quality.

As with the case studies before, I began the session by asking Ella to draw images to represent her weekly routine when she was home-educated. This was quite difficult for Ella as she was trying to remember things from several years ago. However, it was generating good discussion so I continued with the task.

I was also interested in Ella's approach to this task. For each day of the week she asked her mother what they used to do. She was careful to double check instructions with me and when it came to spelling words, such as "Wednesday," she checked the spelling with her mother. Again, this was very different to the approach many of the others took. For Ella, it felt that there was a definitive right and wrong answer which, in terms of spelling, would be correct. However, she seemed cautious in wanting to "get the task right" in comparison to some of the other children that I had worked with who immediately immersed themselves in the activity without asking many questions.

For the final part of my work with the Simmonds, I asked Ella to consider where her ideal learning environment might be. She thought carefully about her choice and then decided upon the deck of a boat and modelled this. Figure 13 shows her completed construction. Ella reflected that she likes to learn outside but in her considerations decided that her learning style and location and is dependent on what it is that is being taught, therefore she liked the idea of being able to go inside the boat as well.

Figure 13: Ella's Model of her Ideal Learning Environment



5.7.2 The Simmonds Family's Pen Portrait

The Simmonds Family

Ms. Simmonds and her two children; Ella – 10 years old,
Ollie – 7 years old.

The Simmonds live in the south east of England

Background

Ms. Simmonds used to home-educate Ella although she no longer does. Ella started school at the beginning of Year Two.

Ollie began Reception class the term after his fifth birthday and so was not home-educated for a period longer than is considered the 'norm.'

Points Arising from Observations

- The children were extremely busy with extra-curricular activities, making arranging a date for my visit rather difficult.
- Some lifestyle choices might be considered to be alternative, such as not having electronic devices and not using plasters to cover wounds.
- The family are not sticking as rigidly to their lifestyle choices anymore, for example, Ella now has a Kindle and the family watch television programmes online.

Themes Emerging From the Transcripts

- Ella feels that her home-education background has made her more confident in talking to peers of varying ages.
- Ella expressed an interest in attending school, but situational factors also contributed. For example, the separation of Ms. Simmonds and her husband and the financial implications of this.
- Ella talks about her father having not had a positive experience of school and him being opposed to the school system.
- The children's father lives on a boat.
- Exclusion: Now the Simmonds were no longer home-educators they were no longer allowed on certain online forums nor invited to some events.

Researcher Reflections

- Was the shift in the family's lifestyle choices a result of the children attending school and being part of the 'mainstream world' or Ms. Simmonds' partner no longer being in the family home? Or a combination of both of these factors?

5.8 Forest School: Observation

I visited a Forest School in January 2017 as Mrs. Sanders, from Case Study Two, mentioned that she attended and families there might be willing to talk to me. After gaining approval from the Forest School leader, I was allowed to attend the weekly session which is run specifically for home-educated children. The session runs for a morning and the children are split into two groups, dependent on their age. There is a kindergarten group for the under fives and a more general group for the over fives.

Below are some images I took of the learning environment:

Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 14 shows the fire around which the over fives gathered for the register and to welcome everyone. Figure 15 shows some of the equipment that was available to the young people to use as they pleased. Figure 16 shows an indoor area, which I was told was a relatively recent addition as there had been some bitterly cold sessions.

On the day I attended it was very cold and children were wearing multiple layers of clothing, hats, gloves and scarves. As I was waiting for the session to begin, I

spoke to some of the volunteers who assist in the running of the Forest School. The backgrounds of the volunteers were very varied. For example, one worked at the Met Office as her paid job and volunteered at the Forest School when she could. Another worked as a member of support staff at a local breakfast and after school club. She commented how after volunteering at the Forest School, she finds her work in schools frustrating as children are told what to do rather than it being child-led.

I observed the older children begin their group session during which they organised themselves and invented a game involving walkie-talkies, before being asked to join the under fives group. The younger group are accompanied by their parents so I intended to explain my research to them in the hope that some of them might be interested in participating. On the particular week I attended the toddler group was rather small due to illnesses and the cold weather.

I include some extracts from my field notes:

“The session began around a fire with the activity leader singing a song to greet the puppets that each of the children had chosen. He played the ukulele and from the beginning it felt like there was a certain amount of control given to the children. Each of them was asked if they wanted the section for their puppet to be sung fast or slow, loud or quietly.

The children were then told to dismantle a den and then build their own ones. Parents were around to support the process but I could not believe the large branches that these children were moving! They were bigger than themselves!

...I could not help but reflect on my days of teaching and wonder what Ofsted would make of this?”

Further reading since writing my reflections led to me looking at some Ofsted inspection reports. The most recent one I could find was relating to a school in West Sussex which was inspected in March 2017. The school was found to be ‘good’ in all areas. Some Forest Schools also work closely with local mainstream schools; for example, Exeter Forest School has worked with nine educational establishments including schools, colleges and universities.

The atmosphere was friendly and the children seemed content in exploring their environment. I liked the way that the parents would be on-hand to help their children create their dens and offer suggestions.

I became involved with helping two families light a fire over which the children were going to toast some marshmallows. During this time, I was able to talk at length with the two mothers about their decision to home-educate. Some of the conversations were audio recorded, transcribed and can be found in the Appendix. Not all of the conversations were recorded simply due to practicalities of being able to get the dictaphone out whilst lighting the fire and, notably, one of the mothers seemed to be more forthcoming in the absence of the dictaphone.

These mothers were great to talk to as they were so passionate about their beliefs. For one of the mothers, this stemmed from her own experiences at school. Recollections of these times clearly made her feel very annoyed still. She referred to school as being a “waste of time” on numerous occasions. Much like I had heard from some of the families in the case studies, this mother talked about there being a distinct lack of life skills being taught at school. She said,

“It’s so restricted and who decided that’s what you’re going to learn? There’s nothing about taxes, about how you pay your bills, you know, all of the life skills you need. You don’t learn any of those things. How to budget, how to pay rent. You know, and you’ve got kids who don’t get that stuff at home...”

I questioned her further as I felt that this was a criticism about home life, not necessarily one of the school system. At this stage I was immersed in the participatory element of my work and was having an informal conversation with this mother which felt natural, rather than a formal interview with scripted questions. By questioning her further it allowed me to understand how deep rooted her beliefs were and offered a stimulus for further discussion. I asked her:

“Do you think in a family where they were supported at home, so they got taught the life skills at home and the education at school, do you think that could work? Or is there no scope for that?”

Her response was fairly blunt and she thought there was no scope for this approach. She commented that she got taught life skills at home and was educated at school but this did not work. She put it down to time and the fact that the majority of your day is spent in school, therefore there is a limited amount of time remaining to focus on life skills. I quote,

“...with the best will in the world, if you’re wasting six hours a day in school there’s not much time left... You know, you’re wasting most of the day.”

This parent uses the word “wasting” twice here, suggesting that she places no value on the time spent in school at all. Through further conversation with her, I understand that she was bullied at school. She talked about P.E. lessons and no one picking her to be on their team, so being left until last and the damage that can have on young people’s self-esteem. She was keen to avoid this for her children and she discussed wanting them to be able to explore the world for themselves. She did not feel that there should be an external body putting limits on what they can achieve at certain ages, nor it be dictated what topics they should learn about. This parent gave examples about her child attending a veterinary clinic where he was able to learn about X-rays, an experience which she felt the schooling system would consider beyond him as he was under five years old.

Both parents said that they did not have a problem with other families choosing to send their children to school but they commented that society tends to “blindly follow” one another. Most children go to school, so people do not question the process.

The Forest School attendees also talked about the government being deliberately manipulative and imposing a curriculum with very selective information. Most families supported the notion that learning was a lifelong venture and for many this is why it was so important for their children to not be discouraged by a curriculum which did not mirror their interests.

One particular mother at the Forest School was of the opinion that the child should learn naturally, at their own speed and under their own direction. She talked about an instance where there had been sections of piping outside, water tanks and a ball. She explained how her son had spent a lengthy period of time figuring out how to transfer the ball from one container to another with

the piping, concluding that he was engaging in basic engineering principles. She was of the mindset that the child teaches himself things with the right opportunities being created for him.

5.9 Participant Evaluation Forms

At the end of the project, I revisited families with young people aged ten or over, providing a mutually convenient time could be arranged. I was able to revisit both the Bennett and Peralta family. I decided to remain present in the room whilst the young people completed the forms rather than expect them to complete them in their own time and return them to be by post/email. This was a conscious decision as I thought that the response rate would be poor if the onus was on them to return them, plus I wanted there to be complete closure of the project and my involvement. A limitation to this is that the young people may have felt obliged to comment positively on their experiences due to my presence. Another limitation was that in reading the poems to the children, or them reading them and having a short discussion, I had allowed a very short time for them to process and make sense of their experiences. Reflection is not an immediate process and the exploration of narratives through text is ongoing. For example, what is understood in the first reading is often developed in subsequent readings through noticing features which have been previously missed. This was an oversight on my part as I was expecting the young people to engage with the I poems, read, digest, understand and reflect in one session. I had not truly appreciated the complexity of the task I had set them, nor had I acknowledged the complexity of reflective thinking which requires extensive cognitive skills.

Although, the young people happily engaged and completed the evaluation forms, this is an element of the project that I would definitely change if I was to conduct this study again. I would make the evaluation more practical, like the first tasks had been, and ensure there was sufficient space between the presentation of the I poems and the reflective process. Failing this, as organising visits to the families was proving difficult due to existing commitments, I would collect opinions remotely via email or a video call.

The comments that I did receive from the young people were all very positive and I include a young person's sentence completion activity below as an example:

Figure 17: Example of a Young Person's Evaluation Form

If I were to participate again, I would suggest that... Making stuff But...
I REALLY ENJOYED IT

My thoughts on home-education are.... it is the best
I NEVER want to go to school
my Dog my MUM my DAD i Love my home
my sister (maybe)

Now that my participation in this project has ended, I feel... Fun. Happy. Lucky.
i feel So Lucky

Any additional comments: i think Kavita is really nice.

It is evident that the young person understood the questions and their feedback showed that they are clearly supportive of home-education, but I think the format in which the evaluative process was presented limited the richness of the responses. I cannot overlook that I was expecting the young people to write or dictate their responses and some of these children were not used to recording their thoughts. They were used to learning in a much more informal style. Again, this would suggest that I should have designed a practical task.

I reflected on my evaluation process during the project and wondered whether the parents who had been involved would be willing to complete the forms too. On my final visit, I asked a parent who willingly obliged. The completed form can be seen in Figure 18:

Figure 18: Example of a Parent's Evaluation Form






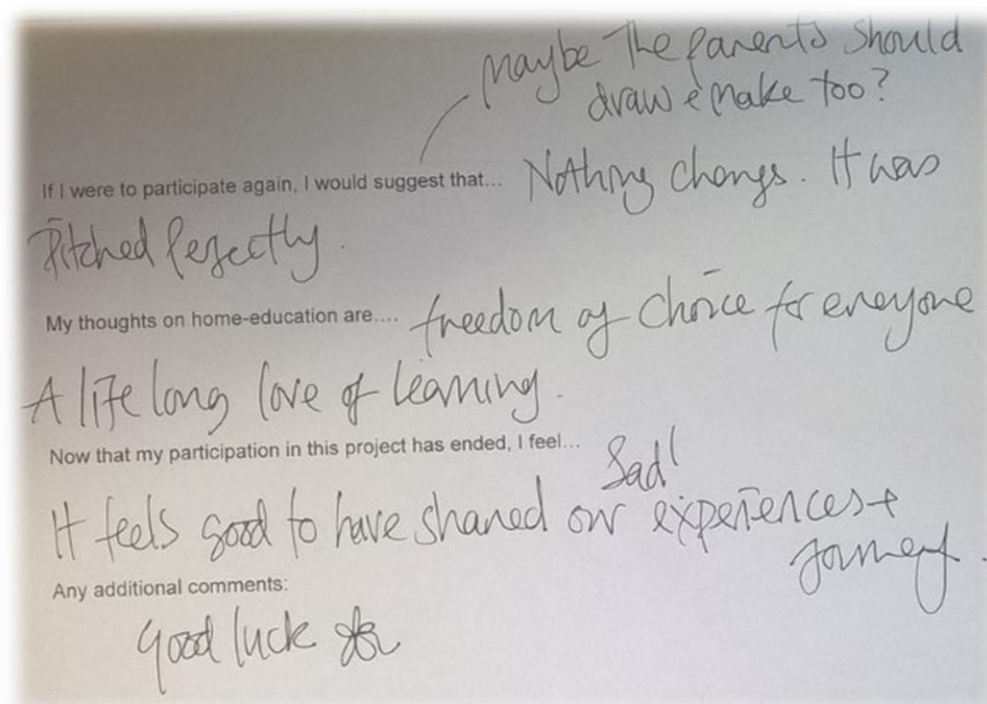
Ratings					
	1 = Poor	2 = Fair	3 = Satisfactory	4 = Good	5 = Excellent
					
I have been able to express my views freely.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Comments					
Participating in this project has changed my views on home-education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments No. But it's always good to talk about it.					
Thinking about my home-education journey has been helpful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Comments					
I have enjoyed been able to discuss home-education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Comments					
The poem presented to me accurately represents my educational experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments					
Complete the following sentences:					
Participating in this project has been.... very therapeutic. Thank you					
My favourite part of the project was.... having the freedom to reflect on our journey without judgement.					

Figure 19: Parental Comments



The comments from this parent, as well as the verbal feedback I had from others, highlighted the appreciation and value that they felt from just being able to talk openly about their approach to learning without feeling judged or criticised. I consider this to be an extremely important point to think about in relation to our practice. It is easy for our own opinions and pre-existing schemas to influence our thoughts on a situation. Whilst it is impossible to completely ignore these, I feel it is crucial to put these aside, immerse ourselves in the current situation and try to understand our client's reality as best we can. In doing so, we also promote the growth of a positive relationship.

5.9.1 A Summary of the Findings

Using all of the data I collected, I have made a summary in relation to each research question:

1. What are the main factors for parents choosing to home-educate?

The literature suggested that there are a number of reasons why parents choose to home-educate. Across both phases of my research, I also found there to be a range of reasons which sometimes change or develop over time. In my research, parents' reasons included:

- Wanting to remove their children from school due to bullying.
- Parents having had bad experiences at school and not wanting to subject their children to something similar.
- Feelings that school was a “waste of time.”
- Children expressing that they did not want to go to school.
- Wanting to be more involved with their children’s learning and share in their moments of success.
- Not wanting their children to follow a rigid curriculum but for them to develop their own interests, at their own speed.

2. What aspirations do home-educators have for their children?

Home-educators’ aspirations for their children were perhaps not too dissimilar to any parent. They often mentioned that they wanted their children to be happy and to continue to have a curiosity about the world. For many home-educators, learning does not begin and end in the school ages of four to eighteen. Learning is considered to be a lifelong process.

3. What impact does legislation have on home-education practice?

Parents reported legislation having very little or no impact on their home-education practice. They were interested in delivering a learning programme which was tailored to the needs and interests of their children rather than ensuring they met government criteria.

4. What are the thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education for young people?

The young people I met spoke about their home-education experiences very positively. Generally, the young people felt that they had made more friendships with their home-educating peers and that these friendships were of better quality. They reported having greater confidence which they attributed to home-education and the regular contact they had with children and adults in a range of situations. Home-educating young people tended to have school attending friends as well. The difference in their educational choices did not interfere with their friendship. All of the young people said that they felt happy about being home-educated. Ella, who was home-educated, but now attends school spoke positively about her home-education experience but said that

she was glad to now be going to school. The young people talked excitedly about learning experiences that they had had at home and in home-education groups.

5. What are the thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education for parents?

Additionally, there were concerns around finances and how families could afford to take their children to activities whilst typically only having one parent in employment. Nonetheless, parents described their emotions changing over time and the small moments of success that they were able to share with their children making the sacrifices worthwhile. Parents described home-education as being challenging at times and incredibly busy, but they were overjoyed to be sharing in their child's educational journey. Parents were generally flexible and felt that home-education did not need to be a permanent decision. They would attend to the needs of their children and if they felt their children would be better served in school, then they were happy to enrol their children into the system.

6. How did the young people perceive the process of talking about, and reading back, their experiences?

The young people enjoyed reading about their experiences in the form of the poems. They were also happy to talk to me about home-education and often proudly recounted anecdotes. The young people found it difficult to reflect on what it had felt like to be part of the process. The comments received indicated that participants were happy and enjoyed the arts-based activities.

7. How did the young people describe the process of being listened to?

This was very difficult to ascertain. My participants were younger than I had anticipated when I designed the study and I had underestimated the cognitive ability needed to reflect on the process. Parents commented that they liked being able to talk about their journey as it probed them to reflect on the problems and successes that they had encountered along the way. Additionally, they liked having the opportunity to be listened to in a non-judgemental way.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.0 Overview

I have structured this discussion in two main parts. The first includes researcher Forest School observations and the second uses the research questions, addressing each one in order followed by a discussion of the methods I used.

6.1 Forest School

The Forest School element of my research was not included in my original design of the study. I attended the Forest School as I was struggling to recruit participants for the case studies and thought that if participants were given the opportunity to meet me and ask questions it may allay some of their concerns. The parents and facilitators of the Forest School group were very accommodating and welcoming. I had only planned to talk about my research, share some written information, answer any questions and leave. However, I began conversing with some of the mothers about my interest in home-education and what had emerged from my Literature Review. They continued talking to me and I joined in with the morning's session.

My involvement with the Forest School began after my second case study. At this point, my knowledge about home-education was growing but I felt that exposure to the group and these informal conversations helped me to better understand the reasons why some families opted for this style of education. I felt that it made me more credible as a researcher and when I was discussing groups with parents and children in the case studies, it was not an abstract concept. It was something I had been part of, albeit for a short time, which helped to form a connection.

Having read some Ofsted reports and coming to the understanding that Forest Schools are being judged by the very same standards that mainstream schools are, I wonder if they are losing the identity that they possibly set out to achieve? The leaders I spoke to during my visit were trained teachers that had moved away from the traditional classroom setting because they were dissatisfied with

the pressures from Ofsted to ensure children achieved certain outcomes and made pre-determined set levels of progress. It seems that the expectations of Ofsted are now also embedded in the Forest Schools. Further research into the opinions of Forest School leaders regarding their involvement with Ofsted and impact of government policy would be interesting. In terms of the outcomes for children, O'Brien and Murray (2007) found that Forest Schools in Britain generally increase motivation and concentration, contributes to the development of language and communication skills and it increases the self-esteem and confidence of the individuals taking part. The parents I spoke to believed that Forest School particularly assisted with motivation and concentration, skills which are transferable to their learning.

In summary, the value of the Forest School was twofold. There was definite value in talking to the parents and having discussions around the factors influencing their decision to home-educate (in relation to research question one) but there was also value in me experiencing the setting and being able to carry this forward into the case studies. I could talk about my experience which demonstrated my genuine interest and in some cases Forest School was common ground, enabling me to quickly establish rapport with my participants.

6.2 The main factors for parents choosing to home-educate

The questionnaire data showed that both dissatisfaction with the school's ability to cater for children's needs and dissatisfaction with the curriculum that is taught at school were both influential factors in parents' decision to home-educate their children. The child's difficulties to cope with school stressors also rated highly.

These views were echoed in the case studies and observational work. Particularly at the Forest School, I had conversations with parents who felt that schools were very selective about what they taught, censoring and filtering the topics. One parent said, "they just teach what society wants us to know." This view was also expressed by another parent at the Forest School who commented that schools did not facilitate the learning of life skills which children need later in life. She referred to skills such as managing personal finances and understanding taxes.

Coping with school stressors was also discussed during my time at the Forest School and in several case studies. Sometimes, I think it was about parents' *perceptions* of their children's ability to cope with school stressors as they brought their own experiences of school into consideration. For example, a mother explained how she was bullied and forced to do certain sports at school which she had no interest in. She did not want her child to endure similar treatment. Bullying was also mentioned by the Bennett family but it was raised by the children. They explained that during the period that they attended school they were both bullied and this was a factor in their parents' decision to remove them.

The literature had suggested numerous ways of classifying home-educators. Early work from Mayberry (1989) suggested that educators fell into one of four categories: religious, academically motivated, social-relational and New Age. More recent literature, such as that by Rothermel (2003) and Badman (2009) suggested that this categorisation was futile as home-educators' reasons were complex and could not be simplified into a mere label. My research supports the views of Rothermel (2003) and Badman (2009) in so far as parents' generally did not have a singular reason for home-educating, but it was determined by the intertwining of multiple reasons. My research highlighted parental experiences at school as being influential, something which was not referred to in the literature that I found. Morton (2010) identified specific groups of home-educators, one of which was labelled the 'last resort' category who had chosen to home-educate often because of bullying. One of my families, the Bennetts, fitted this category but even so, whilst bullying was a contributory factor it was not the only influence. The family wanted the children to learn in more creative ways and socialise with a range of people. Similarly to Lowden (1993), I found that needs within families can change and their reasons for home-educating can change and develop over time. Therefore, categorising families can be somewhat reductionist, masking underlying complexities and not take account of the complex journey parents go on. For example, Sigourney's told her parents that she did not want to go to school anymore and that was the catalyst for their decision. However, over time her parents' interest and understanding of home-education grew to the point that it was more about providing creative opportunities for learning and not wanting

their children to be constricted by the school system. This cannot be captured by a singular label.

In my opinion, some of the parents seemed overly cautious and used their own experiences to inform their choices. I think any choices they made were through love and wanting the best for their children, however, in doing so they did not acknowledge that the schooling system has changed and that their experiences may not be representative of the experiences which children are in receipt of today. For others, they had exposed their children to the school system and were disappointed with what it offered and felt their children would be in a better position socially, emotionally and educationally if they stayed at home.

Another difference between my research and the literature was the emphasis on the notion of 'choice.' These choices came in many forms, from parental choices about educational establishments or home-education, to children's choices about the subjects that they studied. Choice seemed to be enormously significant and something of value to the home-educating families that I spoke to. At school, children would not have the choice about which subjects they pursue from an early age, nor would they have a choice over the timing of lessons and frequency of attendance.

All of the home-educating families I met indicated in some way that having options and listening to their children's views was important. Their own schooling experiences, coupled with their children's views and, if they had attended school, exposure to stressors were the main factors contributing to them deciding to try home-education. All of the families talked to me about how views and opinions fluctuate and whilst home-education was working for them at this specific time, it did not mean that it was always going to be the right decision. They were open to the possibility of re-entering, or in some cases entering for the first time, into the schooling system.

Some of the comments that were made on the questionnaire were somewhat abrupt, abrasive and scathing towards a more formal education. However, the conversations I had with both the young people and their parents were far more accepting. The young people often commented that they had school

attending friends and that this was not a problem. Likewise, parents accepted that for some families schooling was the right decision for them.

Some of the literature referred to the characteristics which have been associated with home-educators. For example, Rothermel (2003) stated that home-educators are often labelled as “eccentric, arrogant, ignorant, middle-class and hippy.” Some participants spoke about experiencing some negativity by the public, such as Mrs. Peralta’s recount of her exchange with a cashier when she found herself having to justify having the children with her on a weekday. Generally, home-educators did not feel as though they were viewed in this way and they all had social circles which included parents of school attenders. The families I spoke to often saw themselves as being in a privileged position where they were able to have a parent out of work in order to support their children’s learning. At the Forest School, the topic of whether home-educating parents would encourage other parents to do the same arose. It was felt that it was a personal choice and not something that parents should be cajoled into, much like parents should not be persuaded to enrol their children into school.

The families I spoke to appeared very open-minded and I genuinely believe they had no issue with their friends being school attenders. The negative comments on the questionnaire were directed at the system rather than those that utilise it. Nevertheless, I think the anonymity of the questionnaire allowed respondents to be honest without any worry about judgements. Whilst I anonymised the case studies, the families first had to verbalise their comments in a face-to-face situation with me and therefore they are likely to have been more guarded.

With some, but not all of the families, there was a sense of ownership and responsibility that seemed to be a significant contributing factor. Parents commented that the young people are their children and therefore, they want to be part of their learning journey. Many commented on the elation of being present when their child understood a new concept for the first time, or read their first word. Again, a feeling of being privileged in sharing in these moments was communicated to me. Parents wanted to be a part of their children’s education. Mrs. Bennett spoke about how she wanted to choose what her children ate and whilst having free school meals may be beneficial to

some families, there should be choice. She did not want decisions to be imposed on her and her children, instead she wanted to be involved in the decisions.

Having had discussions with home-educators during my involvement in Phase Two of the project, I understand it is some people's view that, home-education is less popular amongst families with secondary aged young people because parents do not have the confidence in their subject knowledge or because they want their children to gain the qualifications needed to go onto further education. However, this view differs from the literature. The paper produced by the Department for Education and Skills in 1999 reported that there was a far greater number of children being home-educated at secondary school level than primary. The paper is somewhat dated, so it might be that the home-educating landscape has evolved and there are a greater number of primary school children being home-educated. Alternatively, it might be that there were a greater number of secondary phase home-educators reported because there is an obligation to report children as being home-educated when they are removed from the education system. Therefore, many primary school children are likely to go unreported if they have always been educated at home.

6.3 Aspirations of home-educators for their children

The literature seemed to have a distinct lack of longitudinal work or exploration into the future of home-educated children's lives. Although my research was not longitudinal, I wanted to ascertain home-educators' views regarding the future for their children. Smedley (1992) commented on parents' feeling that school's segregation of children by age was artificial and for some parents, home-education was a way of providing a more organic environment for their child to learn and develop, mirroring the real world thus better equipping them for the future.

Information gathered from the questionnaire was in qualitative form and the comments were created a divide. Some respondents were keen for their children to work towards relevant qualifications they needed to gain employment, and others were clearly unhappy with the world of employment

too. Phrases such as “wage slave” were used. This would indicate that some respondents were not just discontent with the schooling system but systems at broader societal level.

Emerging from the case study work were feelings regarding the school system not having progressed at the same rate as technology and industry. It was felt by some that the jobs that our children were being educated for, are no longer the roles that are important to society. Some felt that the curriculum was so dated and technology had advanced, and continues to advance, so much that computers and machines now complete these roles. It was thought that the creative thinker will be more successful in the modern world as they will find a role for themselves and families generally felt that home-education assists in developing this creativity.

Aside from academia, home-educators voiced wanting their children to be happy and to find their strengths. Education was viewed as a lifelong process and most home-educators did not want to be confined to the time restraints imposed by government and schools (such as GCSEs completed in Year 11 and A Levels completed in Year 13).

Sigourney, the eldest of my participants, spoke about how she wanted to go to university. This decision was fully supported by her parents. The Peraltas were strong in their beliefs that their girls should have the freedom to make choices about their future and choices about what they study. I fully respect the philosophies which they uphold, but I question that in allowing Sigourney to only study the subjects which are of interest to her now, the impact this will have on restricting her choices in later life. Sigourney was selective, although realistic, about the subjects that she wanted to study to GCSE level. She said that she wanted to do Mathematics as she had an interest in it and realised that English Language was needed for most career paths. Admittedly, not all the families I met with allowed their children as much free choice as the Peraltas but I could not help but feel children as young as five were making decisions that were sometimes unwittingly making choices that were impacting on their futures.

Mr. Peralta discussed the length that future generations will be expected to work for given that we have an ageing population that is living longer. He said

that today's young people will be working into their eighties so why are we rushing them through their education and into employment? I understand Mr. Peralta's comments and in part, I agree with this notion. However, it also seems somewhat of a utopian world. The reality of life is that we encounter situations that we do not particularly want to be part of. We do not always have the luxury of being selective over the parts of life we wish to participate in. Therefore, in allowing children to have this monopoly over their education, are we doing them a disservice? Are we setting them up to fail?

Personally, time scales and deadlines are part of what keeps me motivated. Even as I write this research, I consider what a luxury it would be to have another year to collect more data, do further analysis but having a pressing deadline has given me an imminent goal to work towards. For some home-educated children, I worry that the lack of structure will mean that they drift through life without actually achieving everything that they are capable of.

However, as mentioned, Sigourney was clearly a very ambitious individual as were all the children I met. Sally Bennett also had high aspirations in wanting to be a missionary. Mayberry et al. (1995) support these findings as they suggested that home-educated children tend to live in two-parent families that are highly motivated for their children to succeed. Meighan (1997) stated that 25-50% of home-educators are teacher trained. In my sample, four out of five families in the case studies were two-parent families and only one of the families had teacher trained parents. However, two of the other families had a parent working in a non-teaching role in higher education. Clearly home-education encourages achievement but perhaps having an information or advice service for home-educating parents so as they better understand the requirements of entering such a field would be beneficial.

6.4 The impact of legislation on home-education practice

The current legislation as set out in the 1996 Education Act requires that every school aged child is in receipt of "suitable" education, in line with their age, ability and aptitude, through school attendance or otherwise. Specifics on what constitutes a "suitable" education are not stipulated.

The questionnaire data showed that 64% of respondents felt that government legislation has no impact on their practice. From reading the literature, I had thought that legislation was going to be the central focus of this research project. I am aware just how little guidance there is and how monitoring of home-education varies between LAs. I thought that this might be an issue for home-educators especially due to recent negative high profile cases in the media. Home-education is often portrayed as an option chosen by abusive parents to keep themselves away from services who might identify the situation and intervene. I thought that the home-educators involved in my project would be keen to display the great work that they do and be in favour of more LA involvement in order to distinguish themselves apart from these cases and establish home-education more positively.

However, during my case studies the topic of legislation was never raised by the families. As mentioned, my aim was for the families to only share information that they wanted to with me rather than me having a set agenda. This style of research took some time to develop and in the second case study with the Sanders, I raised my agenda of government legislation with Mrs. Sanders to ascertain her opinion. Interestingly, this did not spark deep discussion around home-education and surrounding laws, instead Mrs. Sanders directed the conversation towards government's control of school attenders. Mrs. Sanders told me that she felt forcing children into school at four years old was not appropriate for everyone yet that is the expectation of the government in the UK. She commented that in many European countries, children do not begin school until they are seven years old which she liked the idea of.

None of the families raised governmental pressures on home-educators, instead, I found that they discussed the governmental influences on school attenders. For example, when I was at the Forest School, parents talked about the government being selective about the topics which are included in the school curriculum. The general impression was that the government controlled lots of things in school, from what children should eat, to the topics they learn about, to age-related expectations. By removing themselves from the school system, home-educators were also removing themselves from the attached

legislation and LA involvement. To enforce laws around home-education would merely replicate what these families were trying to escape at school.

Some of the families mentioned the negative attention home-educators receive from the media, although they were just passing comments. For example, Mrs. Bennett explained that in a recent case, a researcher had asked a home-educator about their use of technology. The parent dutifully reported the ways in which they utilise technology in their home-educating lives. When the information went to print, the family were portrayed in a negative light and were reported as only using technology and no other strategies. Mrs. Bennett said that the home-educator was only talking about technology so extensively as they had been told that was the focus of the article. This was one of the reasons she gave for home-educators being so reluctant to become involved in research projects, as their views and approaches are often distorted. Similarly, Mr. Knowles stated that he had faced negative comments regarding his involvement in my research. He explained that as he was relatively new to home-education, he had not yet become immersed in scepticism and resistance like his counterparts.

Badman (2009) reported that home-educators were “fiercely defensive” of their rights and actions. He noted there was a divide between home-educators with some welcoming visits from the local authority officers and being receptive to support (through drop-in centres, resources and materials) and others expressing a preference not to have any contact with their LA. My findings replicated this with comments left on the questionnaire clearly displaying this divide. Some respondents felt that they had a right to subsidised tickets to educational attractions and financial support for resources, whereas others wanted no involvement from their LA as they felt they would then be obligated to report to them and justify themselves.

Badman (2009) also found there to be inconsistencies across LAs in terms of the support that was offered to parents. My research spanned several authorities across England and parents were fairly consistent in saying that there was no support offered. One area, in the south-east of England, where the Peraltas and Simmonds were based, there seemed to be more monitoring of home-educating families. They both reported having had positive

experiences with the home-education officer. Families in other areas of the country reported not having had any contact from their LAs.

6.5 The thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education for young people

My literature search only highlighted one piece of research that explored home-education from the perspective of the young people. Jones (2013) worked with nine children from six families using photographs that the children had taken over a two-week period to explore their experiences and perceptions of home-education. She found that home-educated children had a sense of ownership over their learning and a clear sense of themselves as individuals. Jones (2013) also found that the children saw themselves as different and more privileged than school attenders. My research echoed the clear sense of self and ownership over learning that home-educating young people have. As Jones found, the young people I spoke to generally felt more privileged than school attenders. Although they did not use the word 'privileged,' they all said they would rather be home-educated than attend school with the exception of Ella. I found that although children liked being home-educated, they were very mature in the way they spoke about their school-based peers. The young people did not see educational preference as a barrier to forming friendships and were accepting that some children learn better at school.

The thoughts and emotions of the young people I spoke to regarding home-education were all thoroughly positive. Even including the final family, Ella, who had been home-educated but was now attending school, she reflected that she probably would not be so comfortable sociably if it was not for her home-education experience. She felt that during her period in home-education, she had become used to socialising with people of varying ages and now she is at school, she has a friendship network which spans across the primary years and into secondary school. Although Ella did express that she was glad she now attended school as she feels she learns more from school. Sigourney Peralta, Sam and Sally Bennett all had the experience of school but were now home-educated. They too felt more favourably towards

home-education. Sam and Sally talked about how they were bullied at school and Sally commented that her school-based friendships could be a bit “ropey.” Sigourney had a short period at school when she was much younger and for her there seemed to be a contrast in her enthusiasm for learning. When she talked about school, she stated how mundane it was with the daily task of writing her name and boring reading schemes that she was expected to work her way through. She also talked about a peer who was an exceptional reader and there was an element of comparison. This was a direct contrast to the way she spoke about her current learning. She excitedly told me about various science experiments she had been part of, her current Mathematics work and musical accomplishments. Sigourney did not compare herself to anybody else but was aware of her own strengths and weaknesses. Sam Bennett spoke about feeling as though he got everything wrong when he was at school and reflected similar feelings of not achieving at the same level as his peers. Christie talked about school, despite her having never attended, and she acted out what she imagined it to be like. She pretended to be a teacher at the front of the room, pointing to a board, talking about facts. Her interpretation of teaching seemed similar to that described by Smedley (1992), where the classroom is mostly a one-way communication system, lacking in meaningful interactions. Most of the young people who had attended school also felt this way. They were able to make a comparison, commenting that their opinions were valued more amongst home-educating peers and adults than they had been in school, with the exception of Ella.

As Monk (2009) commented, the home-educating demographic is varied in terms of need, practices, location and motivation so finding common ground may be difficult. I did find that the practices varied amongst the families. The Bennetts had a structured approach which was timetabled and covered a range of subjects which are typically taught at school. However, other families such as the Peraltas, Sanders and Simmonds tended to take a less structured approach. They were generally flexible in the topics covered and learning took place in a range of places.

All of the young people reported home-education helping them to grow in confidence, develop positive and meaningful friendships, re-ignite a curiosity

in the world around them and for learning to be completed in a supportive, rather than a competitive, environment.

One of the limitations of this study is that the young people who participated were from families who had a willingness to be involved in my project. Therefore, they were likely to be children who were enjoying their home-education experience. Given the difficulties I had in recruiting participants, I think it would be hard to avoid this. However, another approach to this work might be to shadow a LA Home-Education Officer on their visits to home-educating families thus encompassing a wider range of families. This would not eradicate the problem entirely as families would still have to consent to participating (and are unlikely to do so if they are aware of their poor practice) and would need to be registered to warrant a visit from the LA. Furthermore, my research has shown a large proportion of this demographic to be strongly resistant to LA involvement, therefore if I visited a family in my researcher role, alongside a member of the LA, I am not convinced that the family would have been as open as they were with me conducting the research independently. However, it might be worth exploring as a way of generating interest in a project in the future.

6.6 The thoughts and emotions associated with experiences of home-education for parents

Existing research such as that by Arora (2006) reports that there has been a rapid rise in the number of families choosing to home-educate. However, there seemed to be very little research that explored parents' thoughts and feelings towards home-education. A large focus of my research was to listen to parents and understand from their narratives why home-education might be on the increase.

As with the young people, some parents also reflected on school being a competitive environment where children are expected to meet certain criteria by set ages. Mr. Peralta used an analogy of a "pack" which I thought was very powerful imagery. I include his comments below:

*"...school has to make sure the pack learns so much within a year.
And if you can't keep up with the pack, then you feel ostracised and*

who's to say how these would have been at school...one of them might have been ahead of the pack and one of them might have been behind the pack and how would that have affected them psychologically if they're behind the pack? We've got friends and their children are having to do extra classes after school and things because they're not with the pack."

He never mentioned what form the "pack" took, but I imagined him to be talking about a pack of wolves; quite vicious and unsupportive of those behind or in front. I was interested in his use of the word "ostracised." This could mean being isolated in a number of ways, for example, by peers, teachers or general school activities.

This view was also demonstrated by the mothers that I spoke to at Forest School who explained that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses and we should be encouraged to explore our strengths rather than be forced into activities we have no interest in. Mr. Peralta also discussed schooling being very restrictive and how it has not progressed at the same rate as society. He reflected on a time before schooling and much like Barratt-Peacock (2003), he argued that if school was the only way for children to develop into functioning adults who are well socialised then historically children would have encountered many difficulties before schooling became an integral part of society.

Generally, the parents wanted to support their children to find their strengths and do so in a creative way that did not destroy their children's passion for learning. Most parents felt that there was no rush to push their children through academic milestones, instead wanting them to achieve when they were ready and enjoy these achievements alongside their children. This view of education is similar to that of Durkheim (1956) who described education as a process in which young people have the opportunity to share ideas, develop solidarity and become socially integrated. For the parents I spoke to, it was less about learning facts by rote and more about developing confident, well-rounded individuals who are able to contribute to society in a meaningful way.

The literature review showed that "flexi-schooling," an approach in which children had a combined programme of part-time attendance at school and

part-time home-education continues to be discussed in the political arena. In November 2016, it was updated and the guidance stated that schools could not place pupils on part-time timetables but it acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable. I did not directly ask my participants but perhaps if this were an option offered to them, they would be accepting of it. Choice was found to be a very important factor for home-educators. If they had the choice over which subjects their children attended school for and which they did not, they might feel happier and become more engaged in the school system. Kahn's (1999) constructivist learning theory which suggests that development is grounded in people's values and knowledge would support this. This theory proposes that children learn best through hands-on experiences, experimentation and problem solving around issues that interest them.

6.7 The young people's perception of the process of talking about, and reading back, their experiences

Jones' (2013) paper explored the views of young people in relation to home-education. Personally, reading her work raised questions as I wondered how the young people felt following the involvement in her research and whether it had triggered any changes or subsequent thoughts about their learning behaviours. As I revisited participants over ten years old to share their I Poem, I thought this provided an opportunity to ascertain the young people's views.

My research questions were largely about the young people and their experiences, as when I designed the project I had envisaged them being the central focus. However, as my project developed, it began to become more holistic and encompass parental views which have been an invaluable contribution.

All of the young people who completed an end of project questionnaire reported that they had enjoyed participating in my research and made positive comments about the experience. When I designed the study, I was unsure about the age range of the participants that would be recruited. I had thought that the majority of my participants would be secondary aged and

therefore would engage in the reflective thinking about their involvement in my work. In reality, my participants were largely of primary age and I only revisited those that were over ten years of age. Nonetheless, being able to label their emotions and explain how hearing their stories had made them feel was a challenging and ambitious ask.

6.8 The young people's description of the process of being listened to

As with the previous research question, the young people's comments were not as reflective as I had expected and they did not distinguish between their feelings related to talking and being listened to. The responses I received from the young people upon hearing their poems was positive and I felt that the positivity, although this was not articulated by the young people themselves, was due to the fact that their words had been used to create something of value. It was valued by their parents, themselves and I; in doing so, the young people understood that their narrative had been listened to. This is merely a hypothesis based on the reactions of the young people and my observations as a researcher. As it was not stated by the young people, I cannot claim it to be a definitive conclusion.

Similarly to the previous research question, it was the parents that seemed to appreciate the process of being listened to most; or they were better able to articulate this than their children. As seen in Figure 19, a parent wrote, "it feels good to have shared our experiences and journey." The parents seemed to appreciate the space to talk about their journey, which for some families the journey had spanned over a decade and for others was relatively new. In some respects, part of my researcher role was about containing the information and feelings expressed by participants and facilitating some self-reflection from parents. This self-reflection was around both lifestyle choices, personal philosophies and educational decisions, which for some home-educators are fairly synonymous.

As I found it difficult to recruit participants, I think the comments that parents and young people made about enjoying being part of the research are encouraging. The comments might be useful in persuading other home-educating families to become involved in future research.

6.9 Methodological Limitations

For Phase One, I used an electronic questionnaire to collect data about home-educating families. The questionnaire was aimed at parents of children who are currently home-educated. In designing the questionnaire, I had tried to keep the number of open-ended questions to a minimum as I did not want participation to be a time-consuming exercise. However, in doing so, I had neglected to acknowledge the very principle of some home-educators. Some home-educating parents do not see themselves as fitting a system or 'ticking a box' and by using closed-end questions, I was asking them to do the exact thing that some participants detested; putting themselves in a category. The most interesting responses that I received were from the open-ended qualitative questions where I was able to establish emergent themes. As discussed in Chapter Four, some home-educators distanced themselves from the questionnaire due to scepticism about being involved in research. Despite there being numerous negative comments about the questionnaire, I feel that it generated a fair number of responses. Upon reflection, I have considered whether the participation in the questionnaire might have been improved if potential respondents had met with me beforehand to alleviate some fears about how the data would be used and what the aims of the research were. However, I think part of the appeal of Phase One, was that it was anonymous and respondents could participate remotely at a time convenient to them.

One limitation might be the way the questionnaire was piloted as the pilot participants were not themselves home-educators. This was probably not the best group of people to pilot the questionnaires with because whilst I was confident that the questions could be understood, the content had not been validated by my target group. As I was already struggling to recruit respondents, I was concerned using these very people to pilot the questions would narrow my pool of potential respondents even further.

Recruitment for Phase Two was extremely time-consuming and I think this was in part due to participants needing to feel comfortable prior to meeting with me, which is understandable given that I was expecting them to discuss their personal educational journeys and philosophical perspectives. This meant numerous phone calls and emails in preparation for my visits. Although, this was relatively easy, the initial generation of interest was the most difficult

part of the study. Having access to home-educating groups was perhaps the biggest barrier. In terms of social media home-educating groups, I now know that these groups are very restricted in terms of who they allow to join and who can post messages in them. I was never allowed to join a group, however, for some groups I was allowed to share the hyperlink to my electronic questionnaire through the administrator of the group. It became apparent just how private these groups were when one of the families in my case studies explained that since they stopped home-educating, they were no longer allowed to be part of the group. The group 'rules' meant that only current home-educators were welcomed; information on the social media pages often explained that researchers, families contemplating home-education, and families who no longer home-educate should not request to join the group.

These stipulations made the group quite exclusive and probably contributed to the hostility that I encountered in trying to gain access to participants and generate interest in my study. I had not foreseen this difficulty as I had originally planned to collate expressions of interest at the questionnaire stage of the research and run focus groups with these participants, followed by the case studies. Although several respondents indicated that they would be interested in participating further, identifying a date and location for the focus group proved difficult largely due to the geographical spread of the participants. I then set up an online forum which I thought would be more popular as it would eliminate the need for participants to be available on the same date and be present at a set location. I had designed vignettes to be stimuli for online discussions and piloted these vignettes with positive feedback. However, the online forum was unsuccessful in developing a discussion. Initially, I thought that this was because participants had not wanted to be the first to post a response and I thought it unethical to ask non home-educators to comment, under the guise of being home-educators, in order to begin a discussion.

However, with better understanding about home-educating groups wanting to be discreet and restricted, I think that a forum designed by a researcher, an outsider, was always destined to fail. Coupled with the views from some home-educators about minimising the time that their children spent in front of

screens and electronic devices, I suppose that they would want to set a good example by not being on such devices themselves.

6.9.1 Reflections on the Questionnaire Design

I was sent a message by a social networking group administrator in August 2016 regarding the questionnaire. She wrote,

“...it is clearly written from a very institutionalised viewpoint by someone who has little understanding of home-education in the UK. I don’t think anyone intends to share it further for that reason. With kindness, I would like to suggest you do some further reading and then rethink your questionnaire.”

This was followed by a list of suggested reading material.

The message I received and my interim analysis of responses triggered me to reflect on whether a questionnaire was the best way to gather data with this particular population. From the papers I had read and the responses I was receiving on the questionnaire, it was becoming clear that home-education was part of an alternative lifestyle choice or a decision that had been made due to dissatisfaction with the education system. Therefore, to design a questionnaire with limiting choices, requiring individuals to fit into a box, or dilute complex decisions to a mere statement and conform with the process was not the best way of collecting data. At this interim point, I was beginning to think that open-ended questions, where participants could enter their own opinions and provide information appeared to be the favoured question style. When designing the questionnaire, I was wary of including too many of this style of question because they can be time-consuming to complete. Despite my growing awareness of this potential error, I chose not to make amendments to the questionnaire because it had been completed in its current format by over forty respondents. I felt to change it at this point would add complications to my study especially in deciding how best to analyse the data.

6.9.2 Summarising the Research Findings

- Similar to Rothermel (2003) and Badman (2009), I found that home-educators are not a homogenous group. There was no singular reason for them home-educating.
- The research highlighted parental experiences at school as being a highly influential factor over their educational preferences for their children. For example, home-educators who had a bad experience at school, often referred to this as a reason for home-educating their child.
- Parents felt that home-education provided a more organic life experience by allowing children to mix with people of a range of ages, rather than being separated by age. The young people generally supported this view. This was similar to Smedley (1992) who found that home-educators found the age segregation unnatural.
- Government legislation did not affect the daily practice of home-educators. However, they discussed governmental influences on school attendees in terms of the subjects offered and the age at which children are taught various concepts.
- Home-educators that had been in receipt of a visit from a home-education officer spoke positively about the experience. They enjoyed having the opportunity to share the work and/or opportunities that their children had been involved in. In the cases where the young people could remember the visit, they also spoke positively about it.
- As The Badman Review (2009) had found, I also found there to be two distinct groups within the home-educating community; those that felt they were entitled to and wanted support, largely financial, from their LA and those who did not want anything at all from their LA.

- Families liked having the opportunity to talk to me about their home-education journey. Generally, the preference was for this to be conducted as a whole family group activity rather than individually speaking with the child and then the parents. They reported enjoying sharing their experiences with someone who was interested and non-judgemental.
- Families wanted to support their children to explore their talents and interests in a creative way. They felt that the prescriptive national curriculum and pressure to learn specific topics at specific ages would quash their child's natural curiosity for learning.
- Amongst the families that I spoke to, home-education was a less popular choice with secondary aged young people as parents felt less confident in delivering academic content and they felt their children needed recognised qualifications in order to go to university or enter employment.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

7.0 Overview

Using the research I have conducted around the topic of home-education, I have considered the implications that this may have on myself both professionally and personally.

7.1 Professional Implications

I have found the consideration of the implications for EP practice particularly challenging and this is, in part, due to the method that I have used. By employing a case study approach for Phase Two, it has meant that my findings are specific and personal to each family. To generalise these findings and suggest that the views expressed by each participant are true of all home-educating families would be unsupportive and contrary to all that I have found. Home-educators, as discussed in the literature review and throughout this research, are not a homogeneous group therefore should not be treated as one. Any involvement with the local authority should respect these differences and individuality of each family. I suggest that EPs adopt a person-centred approach to their practice with home-educating families. Different terms have been used over time to describe the same approach, including client-centred and non-directive. Tudor, Keemar, Tudor, Valentine and Worrall (2004) state that 'person-centred' is the preferred term due it being more inclusive and covering both formal and informal work.

Rogers (1951) wrote about his approach to life, writing "I do not react to some absolute reality...but to my perception of this reality." (p. 484) This belief that there is no absolute reality, instead people having their own perceptions, has affinities with phenomenology and the epistemological stance I took with my research. It also has a number of parallels with a person-centred approach, which Rogers first wrote about its application to therapy in 1977. I am not proposing that as EPs we necessarily have to employ a therapeutic approach to all home-educating cases; I suggest that given the demographic a person-centred approach to understanding each client's situation could be beneficial. The main principles of this approach include bracketing what we already know, or what we think we know. It is not about entirely letting go of past experiences but putting them aside as they might provide an unhelpful interference in

experiencing the present thus limiting the new learning that could occur (Tudor et al., 2004).

Another important principle is about describing what we experience rather than trying to analyse or interpret it. On the surface of it, this appears to be a fairly easily achievable goal. However, I have found it to be harder in practice. For example, a mere facial expression such as a smile, may lead us to believe the client is happy, rightly or wrongly. A person-centred approach would encourage us not to make this judgement, or indeed wonder about what else this smile could mean. Instead, it is about resisting these inferences and allowing the client to lead us through their personal narrative using the words of their choosing. Being non-judgemental was something that was commented on as a positive in the evaluations by parents. They said that this enabled them to talk freely about their experiences. In my opinion, using a person-centred approach will ensure that EPs remain as neutral as possible, bracketing their own experiences and focusing on the words used by home-educators and in turn ensure they have a better understanding of the support that is wanted.

Tudor et al. (2004) state that the third principle is about not placing a hierarchy on the things we notice. These include nuances, gestures and the tone of voice. It is suggested that these factors are understood with equal importance.

A culmination of these principles will help to develop a more person-centred approach to practice and I believe that this will encourage us to put the family at the centre of the work, view them independently, value their ideas, empower them and create a climate of trust between the family and the practitioner. This may go some way to address hostility between home-educators and the local authority which was highlighted in the questionnaire and in some of my case studies.

Both phases of the research demonstrated how there are such vast differences local authority support and monitoring across the country. Additionally, information from The Badman Review (2009), as discussed in Chapter Two, identified several LAs who were proactive in supporting their home-educating community. For example, North Yorkshire County Council who were organising regular 'drop-in' days where both families and professionals from the authority could gather. From my research, I know that there are many home-educating

groups that have formed across the country. None of the ones I came across were initiated by the LA. Some of the responses on the questionnaire evidently expressed views that they wanted nothing to do with the LA, but for those who have not yet totally distanced themselves, perhaps having monthly or termly drop-in sessions would assist in building positive relationships. It would show the home-educating community that the LA cares and is supportive. Moreover, it would raise awareness that this demographic exists amongst professionals. I worry that young people who are home-educated may miss opportunities to identify special educational needs as they are not well placed to have access to professionals, especially if they have never attended school.

One of the biggest barriers for professionals working with home-educating families is that many choose not to register their children with their LA. Professionals can only assist families and individuals that they know about. Badman recommended that there should be a compulsory register for home-educated children. My research showed a mixed response from participants regarding their views on registering their children. Some felt that it was a positive step in reducing the negative speculation from the press whilst others wanted to distance themselves from the LA entirely. Not having a register comes with its own difficulties, for example, it is unclear what would be a reasonable suggestion for professional involvement because we simply do not know the size of the population we are working with. As discussed in the literature review, there are estimates, but the estimates vary considerably. Until we know the number of people constituting this demographic, we cannot realistically think about how we can best support them. However, from the most recent House of Commons briefing paper (2017) it seems that we are no further forward with a compulsory register than when Badman recommended it in 2009.

Finally, I think there should be an individual at each LA who has a specialism or designated time for home-education input. I am aware there is resistance from home-educators to involve the LA in their lives, but I believe these concerns to be a result of historic relationships. If EPs with this particular specialism were seen to be pro-active, attending existing library groups, Forest Schools and disseminating advice perhaps home-educators would be more willing to engage. If home-educators saw professionals being supportive and interested, perhaps they would be more willing to register themselves and engage in

dialogue with the LA. As most of the parents in the case studies said, they valued having someone to talk to about their home-educating experiences. The Simmonds family reported that they enjoyed the visit from the LA as it was a chance to showcase the hard work that they had produced and creative projects they had been involved in. Additionally, as evidenced by my questionnaire, people can become easily agitated by others asking naive questions. Therefore, having a professional with some level of understanding of home-education, the various forms it takes, the same person to talk to and build a relationship with should they want to, could be helpful. For some families, no matter what the LA does, they will always distance themselves as that is part of their philosophy of opting out of a system. For others, I think compassionate and well-meaning input would be welcomed if presented in the right way. Ultimately, home-educators are part of the wider community and as EPs we have a duty of care to the whole community, not just school attendees.

7.2 Researcher Reflections

The process of recruiting participants for both phases of my research project was extremely difficult. There were several instances of participants agreeing to participate but then withdrawing before the first meeting. Participants who I did manage to speak to in the case studies explained that home-educators were wary of talking to researchers because of the misrepresentation and negative publicity that they sometimes receive. Participants also seemed to lead very busy lives, particularly those with multiple children. Their days did not fit neatly into a school day but spread across the evening and into weekends. This made organising visits at a mutually convenient time very difficult. I think this theme is important as some perceive home-educators to spend most of their time at home, however, I have seen that most of their days are packed full of creative and interesting activities.

I was fairly flexible in the way that my conversations with the families occurred in the case studies. For example, in terms of, whether the parents were in the room at the time of the conversation and in allowing them to choose the location. I have reflected on this point in my field notes and made a conscious decision not to be directive thus there are inconsistencies regarding how the conversations occurred. Admittedly, this would make replicating the study more difficult and it certainly made transcribing the conversations more problematic

than they ordinarily might have been. This is because in some instances there were five people in the room, almost like a focus group, so I had to attend to the voices very carefully as there were overlaps in speech. Another consideration is the level of honesty and authenticity in what was said by the young people who were in the presence of their parents. Perhaps their parents were acting as gatekeepers, ensuring that nothing untoward was being said and therefore, when analysing, I have had to try hard to consider the relevance of the timings of parental interjections.

Nevertheless, I felt that the quality of data that emerged was better than it might have been if there had just been myself and the young person in the room. This is because often anecdotes and stories would be told. Each person adding something of value to the story, or one story triggering the memories of another individual.

I decided to transcribe the information myself, which, although highly time consuming was an important part of the process for me. Some might argue that my time would have been better spent on the analysis of the transcripts, but in my opinion, listening to the pitch, rhythm, intonations and emphasised words was important in really capturing the meaning of what was being said. When finding the meaning in the narratives, I carefully considered my role in the process. As Morawski (2001) comments, the researcher is not, and can never be totally neutral. This was a particularly difficult battle I had, in remaining objective and neutral as I felt this made me appear inhuman and uncompassionate. I have tried to remain as objective as possible in writing this study, but I acknowledge that the lens through which I view the world will have an impact on how I have interpreted each narrative.

7.3 Personal Development

The process of conducting the research has made me more aware of my own values and belief systems, but it has also developed these values. Initially, I was somewhat sceptical about home-education but nonetheless intrigued to find out more. Hearing from families who have successfully managed to home-educate their children whilst negotiating criticism from family members and the public has led to me develop a lot of respect for them. These families have often

made a carefully considered decision to home-educate. It had only seemed like a last resort for one of the families I spoke to, whilst for the remaining families it was a decision based on strong philosophical reasoning. In my experiences as a trainee EP, the home-educating families I have worked with have all experienced some sort of negativity, stigma or felt that the school system was ill equipped to deal with their children. It seems to me that there is a silent group of home-educators who are either willingly or unwillingly operating and providing an education for their children with no support from the local authority. These are the strong-minded group who have embedded philosophical views about wanting their children to experience a broad curriculum that is not dictated to them, rather something they explore themselves. A curriculum of discovery, rather than discreet subjects taught at set times. Instead there was a sense of children doing the things that they enjoy, thus encouraging a curiosity about the world and life-long love of learning.

I fully respect these views and have seen first-hand the happiness of the young people who are raised in these environments. The young people I worked with were all of school age and I would be most interested to see how they fair as adults. I am interested in how successful they are in their adult lives; 'success' being somewhat of an abstract concept as it means different things to different people. More specifically, I wonder how these young people will function as adults and cope with a world where there are expectations for them to complete things they do not necessarily want to do and have to stick to rigid timings.

Personally, whilst the research has been enlightening and dissuaded me from being quite so judgemental, it has not completely alleviated my concerns about home-education. What I have seen has been hugely positive, but, I have my reservations about the futures of some of these young people. One of the biggest positives I have observed is home-educators' flexibility and willingness to adapt, therefore it is likely that as the children grow and their ambitions become clear, their parents will do everything they can to support these.

Whilst I have acknowledged my personal reservations, I also know that it is important for me to be able to put them aside for the best interest of my clients. The world is full of choices and if you approach a situation allowing it to be clouded by pre-existing values, you will not fully appreciate the current moment. My research undoubtedly improved in quality as I progressed. In part, this was

due to gaining experience as I went along, but I also believe that I went into each situation less weighed down by my own preconceptions and more open to embracing the opportunities presented to me. I became more aware of what was important to the demographic I was working with. For example, timings were a big factor; more specifically, allocating participants a designated time-slot was difficult. Some home-educators value doing things at their own pace and only ending an activity when it reaches a naturally occurring ending, meaning that things can often run over. This is not true of all of the families that I worked with, but certainly some of them. As such, being flexible and open to changing timings on the day was important to accommodating them. Had I not understood their values and beliefs around natural endings, this might have been a contentious issue.

In summary, I have always thought of my role as an EP as having an element of being an advocate for young people and families. The time I have spent with people and the information gained from the questionnaire has highlighted that in order to be a genuine advocate, a deeper understanding of the client's background, lifestyle choices and reasoning is needed. I think that as EPs we are all employing a degree of narrative ontology. By this I refer to the process of not just hearing what our clients' say, but actively listen to, and constructing a meaning or story from the information we are provided with. We then re-construct this story which is often shared in the form of a report or consultative meeting. Perhaps, if we do not already, we should consider checking this narrative with the client prior to sharing on a wider scale. This could be done by looking over a draft report before it is finalised, writing a letter to the child thanking them for their input and checking key points or simply checking through questions whilst in the room with the young person or adult.

Part of what made this research project so rewarding was the longevity of my involvement. Throughout this prolonged involvement, I did not have an excessive number of visits to the participants which as researchers we might sometimes feel obligated to do thinking that it makes the research appear more robust. Personally, the beauty of project lay within the infrequency of my visits. My time spent with the families was intensive and rich in quality. It was an opportunity for them to voice and tell the story of their journey into home-education. For some of them, it felt as though it was the first time they were

telling the story, at least in such depth. I facilitated the discussions with questions but ultimately, the families coordinated and told the stories themselves, clarifying points with one another. I consider the time periods in between my visits as being invaluable periods for each family to reflect on what they shared, assess if it was still relevant and continue to develop their home-education approach. Therefore, as I reach the end of my research journey, perhaps my biggest learning point is that it is not about providing the right answers for clients but it is about asking the questions that are going to be a catalyst to thought and over extended periods of time create changes.

My most recent development straddles both personal and professional realms, as neither strand of our being operates in a vacuum and can be viewed in isolation. I was facilitating a consultation in a primary school with a mother and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo). The mother expressed concerns regarding the ethos of the school, stating that she felt there was too much reliance on technology. She said that she would much prefer her daughter to be learning outside in a 'Forest School' environment. Her daughter's needs are largely around anxiety which are resulting in her being a selective mute, only conversing with two peers and, occasionally, her teacher in a one-to-one situation. There were definite similarities between this mother's thinking and that of some of the home-educating families I met with. I was eager to suggest home-education, however, I was still unclear on how my local authority would react if they knew I had made this suggestion.

Since then, I have had discussions in supervision and we have reached the conclusion that EPs, as set out by the HCPC standards of proficiency, must:

"understand the need to act in the best interests of service users at all times."

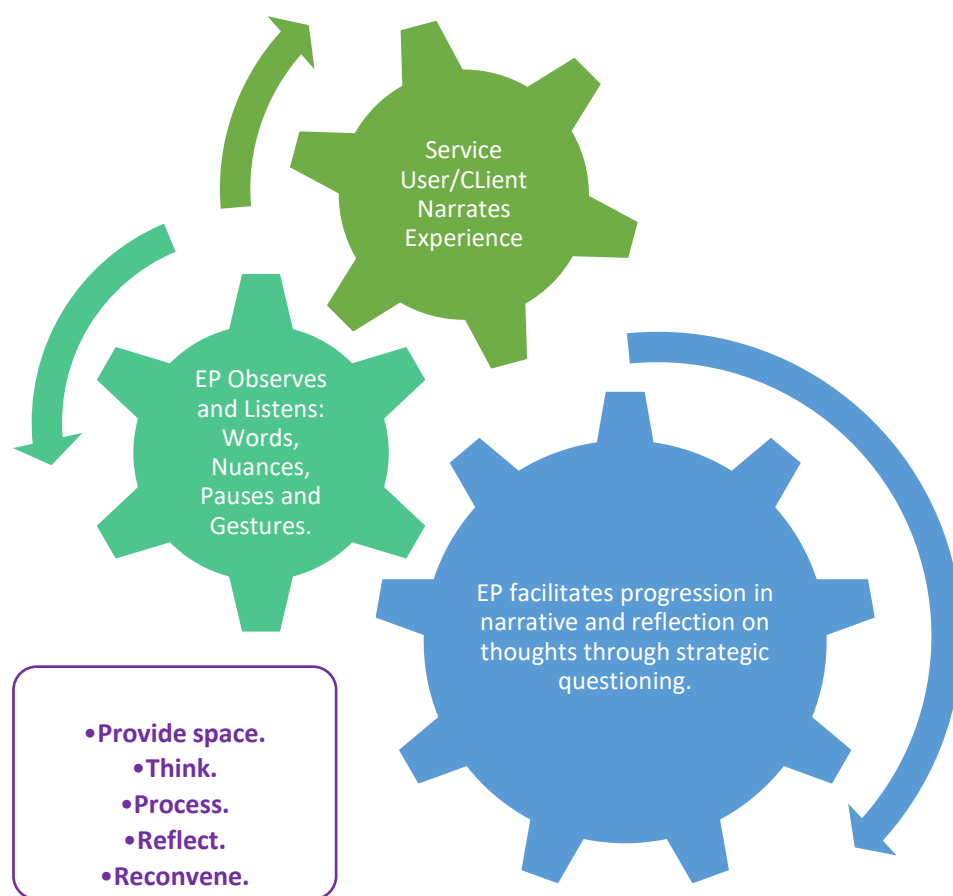
Sometimes, acting in the best interests of service users means making suggestions about alternative provisions or creative educational solutions that they may not have yet considered. As discussed, I think posing it as a question, making the parents aware that home-education is an option, allowing them time to process it and giving them the space they need to make an informed decision will be my way forward with this case. Prior to this research, I would not have even entertained the thought of suggesting home-education.

For some people, home-education is an emancipatory decision, distancing them from the constraints of social and political rhetoric. I offer, that as researchers and practitioners, we can learn from these individuals adopting the courage that they have had to reach beyond the 'norm.' We should not be afraid to step out of the confines of what we know and explore a new world, opportunities and be creative about the way we practice. It can be liberating to immerse yourself in another's life and very fulfilling to live each word of the narrative with your client.

7.4 Summative Diagram

I have attempted to compress the key points taken from this research into a simple diagram to act as a prompt for EPs in practice which can be seen in Figure 20. This is not dissimilar to how EPs might approach other pieces of casework; however, the findings from this research suggest that there is a high level of value placed on the service user being able to narrate their experience and this is where I think work with home-educators differs from work with other clients. For several of the participants, they appreciated being listened to by someone that had an interest and a knowledge base in this area. Moreover, whilst EPs typically endeavour to involve immediate family members in their work, this seemed a particularly important factor for home-educators. Many of the home-educators I spoke to enjoyed being a part of their children's learning journey and were present during my data collection. Family members also enjoyed having input to the research. EPs should be aware of this and note that in some instances the process outlined in the summative diagram could be completed individually and repeated with different family members, alternatively it could be a collaborative process and work could have a whole family unit focus. My research would suggest that home-educating families like to be seen as a unit from the start. Although practice varies from practitioner to practitioner, many EPs tend to start with seeing the child then parents are involved at a later stage, sometimes not at all. EPs should be mindful when working with home-educating young people that they may want siblings and parents involved alongside them from the beginning.

Figure 20: Summative Diagram



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APPENDICES

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CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Academic Unit: Graduate School of Education

Title of Project: 'An Exploration of Home Educators' and Home-Educated Children's Experiences in the South-West of England'

Research Team Member(s): Kavita Solder

Project Contact Point: ks509@exeter.ac.uk

Supervisors: Tim Maxwell; Shirley Larkin

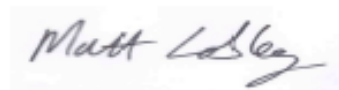
This project has been approved for the period

From: 10th June 2016
To: 30th September 2017

Ethics Committee approval reference: 201516-078

Signature:

Date: 10th June 2016



(Matt Loble, Chair, SSIS College Ethics Committee)

Consent & Information Form - Parents

An Exploration of Home Educators' and Home-Educated Children's Experiences in the South-West of England

Details of Project

My name is Kavita Solder and I am a Doctoral student at the University of Exeter, conducting a research project in the South-West.

This project is exploring the views of parents who home-educate in the local area regarding:

- *Decisions to home-educate*
- *Experiences, as a parent, of school (if applicable) prior to home-educating*
- *Local support*
- *Local policy*
- *National legislation.*

These topics will initially be explored through a questionnaire, and if interested, parents will have the option to discuss these areas further in a small focus group.

The project also explores children and young people's experiences of home-education and, if applicable, the transition from school to home education. Experiences will be explored through visual media, including photographs, play dough and video diaries. It is hoped that some of this work can be shared with the community in a local exhibition, if you agree to participate.

The data collected will be used and the completed work will be discussed with others in the research team at the University. A summary will be provided to the local authority. Personal details will not be included.

Contact Details

For further information about the research please contact:

Name: *Kavita Solder*

Postal address: *Graduate School of Education, St Luke's Campus, University of Exeter, Heavitree Road, Exeter, EX1 2LU.*

Telephone: *00 44 07708869318*

Email: *ks509@exeter.ac.uk*

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Dr Tim Maxwell (Research Supervisor) – T.Maxwell@exeter.ac.uk

Dr Shirley Larkin (Research Supervisor) – S.Larkin@exeter.ac.uk

Confidentiality

Interview tapes and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except as may be required by the law). However, if you request it, you will be supplied with a copy of your interview transcript so that you can comment on and edit it as you see fit (please give your email below so that I am able to contact you at a later date). Your data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Data Protection Notice

Data Protection Notice - The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. Anonymous questionnaire data will be stored on the researcher's password protected laptop. Data from the focus groups and case studies will be stored on an encrypted device. All data will be securely destroyed by September 2018. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form.

Anonymity

Interview data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of your name, but I will refer to the group of which you are a member (i.e. home-educators in the South-West). Throughout the case studies, a pseudonym will be given so as individuals are non-identifiable.

Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage;
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me;
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;
- If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form;
- all information I give will be treated as confidential;
- the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

.....

(Signature of participant)

.....

(Date)

.....

(Printed name of participant)

.....

(Email address of participant if they
have requested to view a copy of the
interview transcript.)

.....

(Signature of researcher)

.....

(Printed name of researcher)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s).

Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

Consent & Information Form – 7+

An Exploration of Home Educators' and Home-Educated Children's Experiences in the South-West of England

Details of Project

My name is Kavita Solder and I am researching home-education. I am interesting in learning more about your experiences.

I am inviting you to be part of this research study but it is your choice whether you wish to take part or not. I have discussed this project with your parent(s)/guardian and they know that I am asking you whether you want to be part of it. You do not need to decide now and you can discuss it further with your parent(s)/guardian if you want.

There may be some words that you do not understand or you may want to ask me to explain more about something and this is fine. You can ask me now or contact me using the details provided.

Contact Details

Name: *Kavita Solder*

Postal address: *Graduate School of Education, St Luke's Campus, University of Exeter, Heavitree Road, Exeter, EX1 2LU.*

Telephone: 00 44 07708869318

Email: *ks509@exeter.ac.uk*

You can also contact the following people who are also involved in the research:

Dr Tim Maxwell (Research Supervisor) – T.Maxwell@exeter.ac.uk

Dr Shirley Larkin (Research Supervisor) – S.Larkin@exeter.ac.uk

What will be expected of you?

There will be four parts of this project:

- 1) The first part will involve you taking photographs which relate to yourself as a learner; What do you like learning? How do you learn best? Where do you learn?
If you do not have a camera, you will be allowed to borrow one but you must take care of it and return it at the end of the project. If you do not want to take photographs,

you could use PlayDough to make a model to show how you learn or what you think about learning.

- 2) Next, we will talk about the photographs that you have taken or the model you have made. If you do not want to answer some questions, then that is fine, you just need to tell me. This conversation will be recorded but no-one else will listen to the recording.
- 3) You and I will draw a picture(s) related to your learning and the journey you have been on. If you have been at school then you can think about your experiences there and how they are different /similar to your experiences now.
- 4) You will keep a diary using a video camera. You will be allowed to borrow a camera if you do not have one, but you must take care of it and return it once the project is finished. You will record any key moments; really good days, or bad days, or just talk about what you have done.
- 5) I will collect your video diary and check that you understand what will happen next with your videos and pictures.

Confidentiality

I will not tell people, outside of the research team, that you are taking part in this research and I will not use your name in the project. After the research is over, you and your parents will be shown the information that I have collected and you will have a choice as to whether you want it to be in my project or not.

Information about you that will be collected from the research will be put away and no-one but the research team will be able to see it. Any information about you will have a number on it, or a pseudonym, instead of your real name.

Anonymity

The information collected about you will be kept safe and not given to anyone outside of the project. It might be that this information is published, but I will ensure that your real name and any other personal details are not used.

Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- Even if I agree to take part now, I am allowed to change my mind;
- It is my right to say if I do not want my information to be used in this project;
- Any information I give will only be used for this project (which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations) and not shared with anyone else;
- The information may be shared amongst people at the university but my name will not be used;
- All information will be kept safely and none of my personal details will be shared;

- The researcher will not use my name, address or other personal details to ensure that I cannot be identified.

.....

(Signature of participant)

.....

(Date)

.....

(Printed name of participant)

.....

(Email address of participant if they have requested to view a copy of the interview transcript.)

.....

(Signature of researcher)

.....

(Printed name of researcher)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s).

Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

Appendix 4

Consent & Information Form – Under 7s

An Exploration of Home Educators’ and Home-Educated Children’s Experiences in the South-West of England

Details of Project

My name is Kavita Solder and I am researching home-education. Research is a way of learning more about a certain topic. I am interesting in learning more about your experiences.

Let’s look at the following questions:

Are you happy to talk to me about your learning?

Are you happy to use Play Dough or Lego during our conversations?

Do you understand that if you do not want to answer any questions then you do not have to?

Some extra information:

I will write about our discussion but I will not mention your name.

When I have finished this study, I will write a report about what was learned. You and your parents will have the choice about which parts of the discussion you are happy for me to include in my report.

You do not have to be part of this study if you do not want to be. If you decide to stop after we begin, that is okay too.

Although I will not mention your name, if you tell me something which makes me think that you may be unsafe or in danger, I will have to share this with another adult.

Having read this information, would you like to be part of this study?

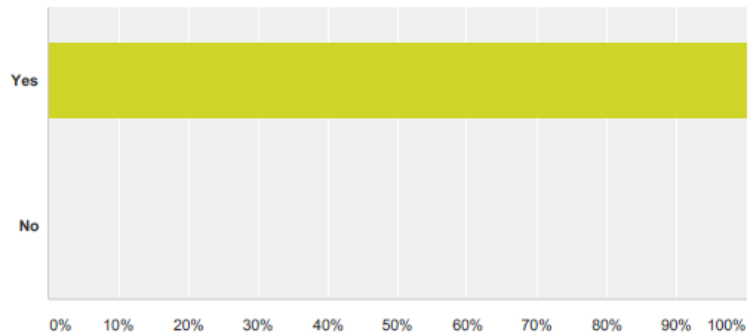
.....
(Signature of participant)

.....
(Date)

.....
(Signature of researcher)

Q1 Are you aged 16 years or over?

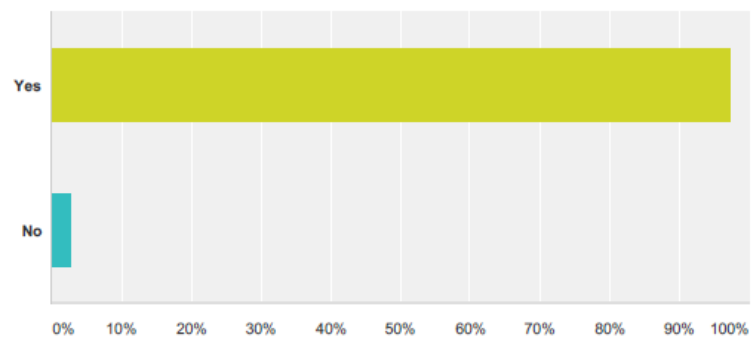
Answered: 125 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100.00%	125
No	0.00%	0
Total		125

Q2 Have you read and understood the information for participants on the previous page?

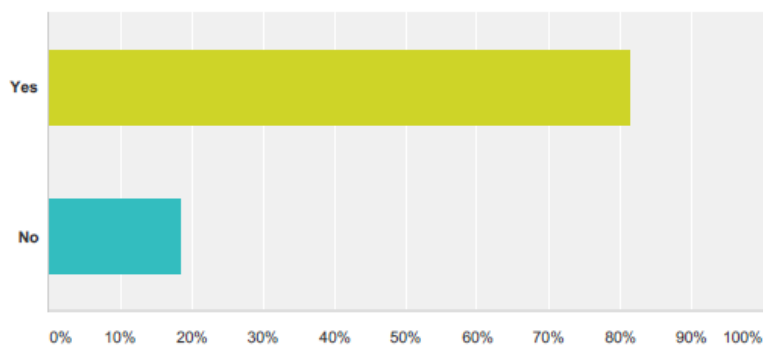
Answered: 108 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	97.22%	105
No	2.78%	3
Total		108

Q3 Have you had the opportunity to contact the researcher (to ask questions or discuss the study)/ has the researcher's contact information been provided?

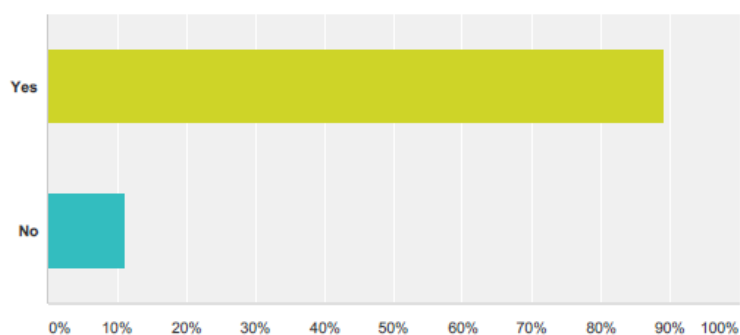
Answered: 108 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	81.48%	88
No	18.52%	20
Total		108

Q4 Have you received enough information about the study?

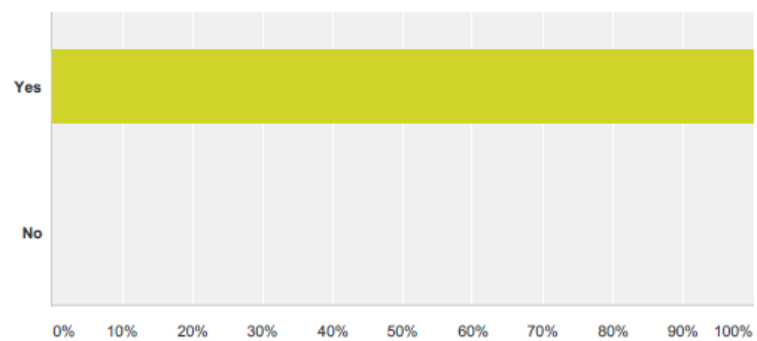
Answered: 108 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	88.89%	96
No	11.11%	12
Total		108

Q5 Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without having to give a reason?

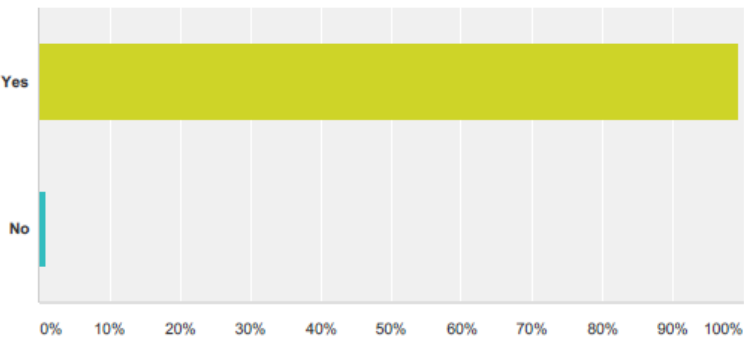
Answered: 108 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100.00%	108
No	0.00%	0
Total		108

Q6 Do you agree to take part in this study?

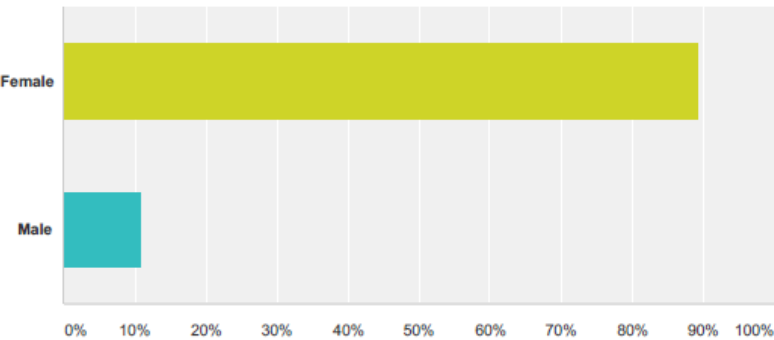
Answered: 108 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	99.07%107
No	0.93%1
Total	108

Q7 What is your gender?

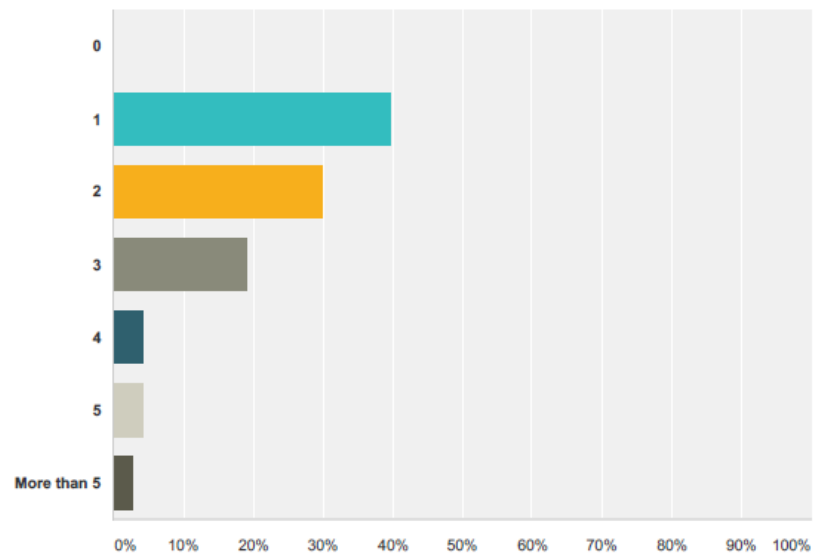
Answered: 74 Skipped: 51



Answer Choices	Responses
Female	89.19%66
Male	10.81%8
Total	74

Q8 How many school-aged children live within your household?

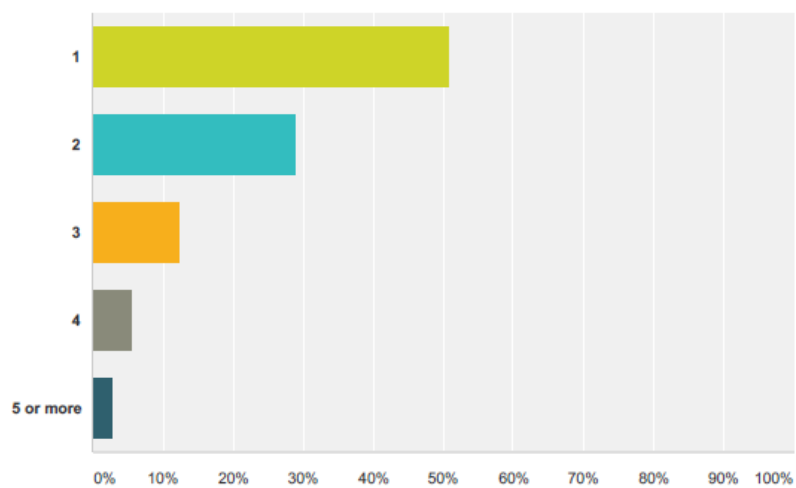
Answered: 73 Skipped: 52



Answer Choices	Responses	
0	0.00%	0
1	39.73%	29
2	30.14%	22
3	19.18%	14
4	4.11%	3
5	4.11%	3
More than 5	2.74%	2
Total		73

Q9 How many school-aged children are home-educated in your household?

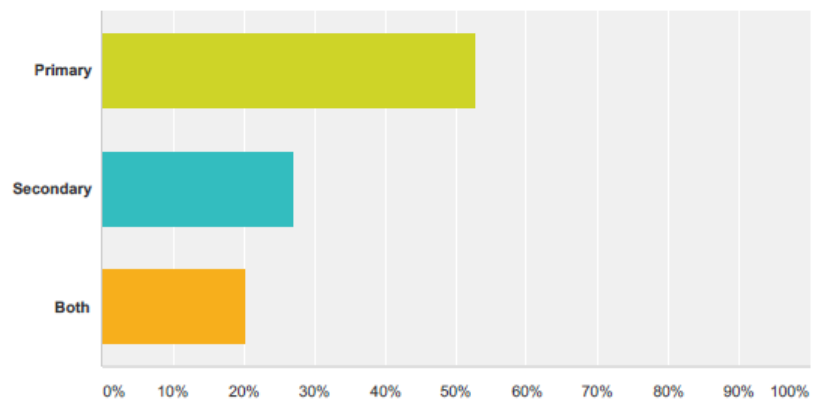
Answered: 73 Skipped: 52



Answer Choices	Responses	
1	50.68%	37
2	28.77%	21
3	12.33%	9
4	5.48%	4
5 or more	2.74%	2
Total		73

Q10 Is the child/children you are home-educating of primary school or secondary school age?

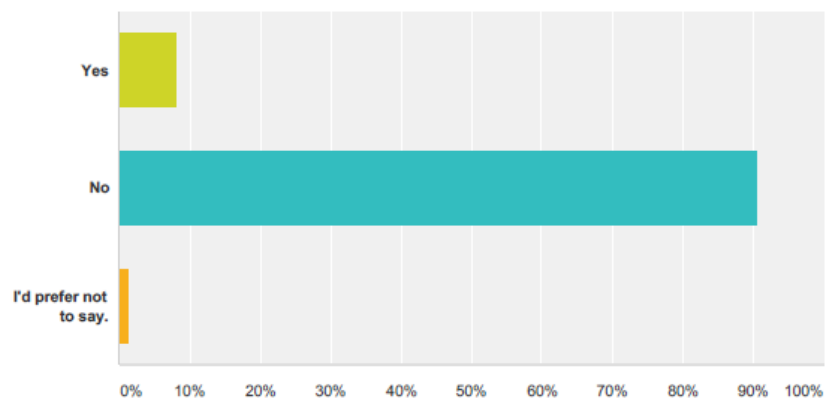
Answered: 74 Skipped: 51



Answer Choices	Responses	
Primary	52.70%	39
Secondary	27.03%	20
Both	20.27%	15
Total		74

Q11 Does your child have an Education, Health and Care Plan?

Answered: 74 Skipped: 51

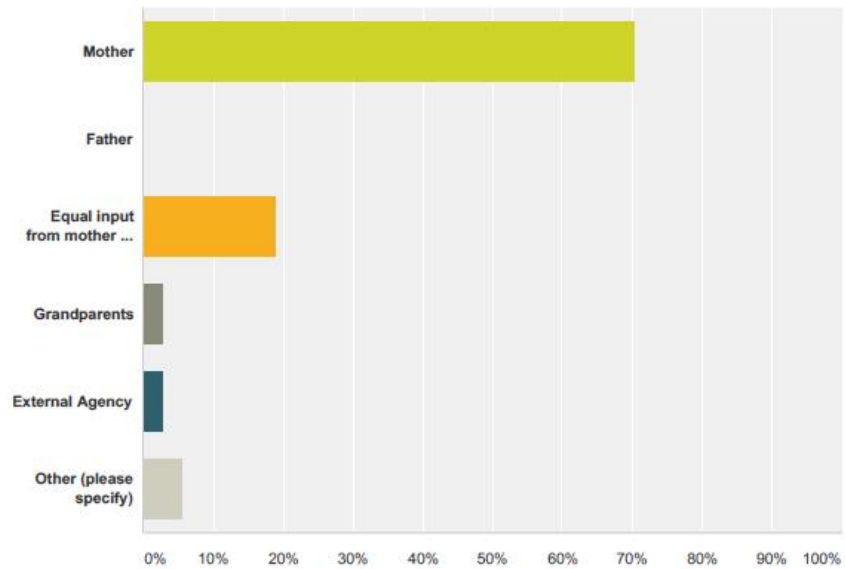


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	8.11% 6
No	90.54% 67
I'd prefer not to say.	1.35% 1
Total	74

#	If yes, could you briefly explain what your child's main area of need is?	Date
1	Autism	11/13/2016 8:20 PM
2	asc	8/26/2016 7:13 AM
3	complex emotional needs	8/25/2016 12:08 PM
4	autistic spectrum	8/21/2016 6:40 AM
5	Statement, not EHCP, in absence of explanation I'm assuming you consider them the same? ASD (probably PDA) plus sensory processing/ modulation disorder.	7/28/2016 9:02 AM
6	Cerebral palsy	7/8/2016 12:11 PM

Q12 Who provides the majority of education for your child?

Answered: 74 Skipped: 51

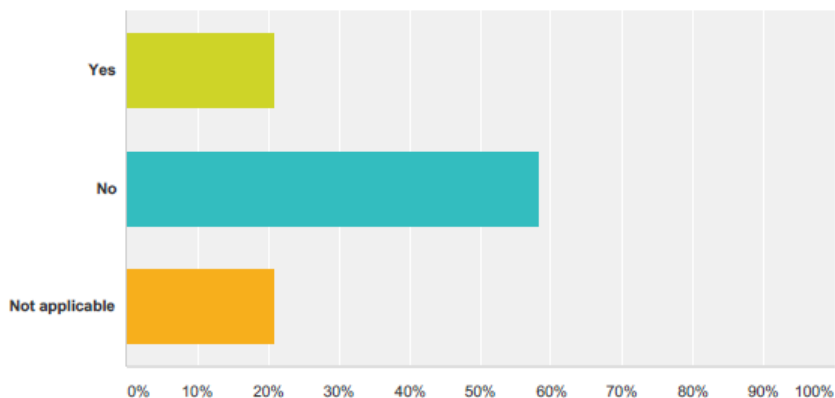


Answer Choices	Responses
Mother	70.27% 52
Father	0.00% 0
Equal input from mother and father	18.92% 14
Grandparents	2.70% 2
External Agency	2.70% 2
Other (please specify)	5.41% 4
Total	74

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Mainly mother, but father input as time allows	9/2/2016 1:55 PM
2	Private tutors	8/18/2016 7:20 AM
3	Part-schooling - 2-3 days, plus mother and father equally	7/12/2016 3:53 AM
4	The child himself	7/6/2016 4:30 AM

Q13 Do you feel that your home-educated child/children's relationship with the main educator is different to other adults in your household?

Answered: 72 Skipped: 53



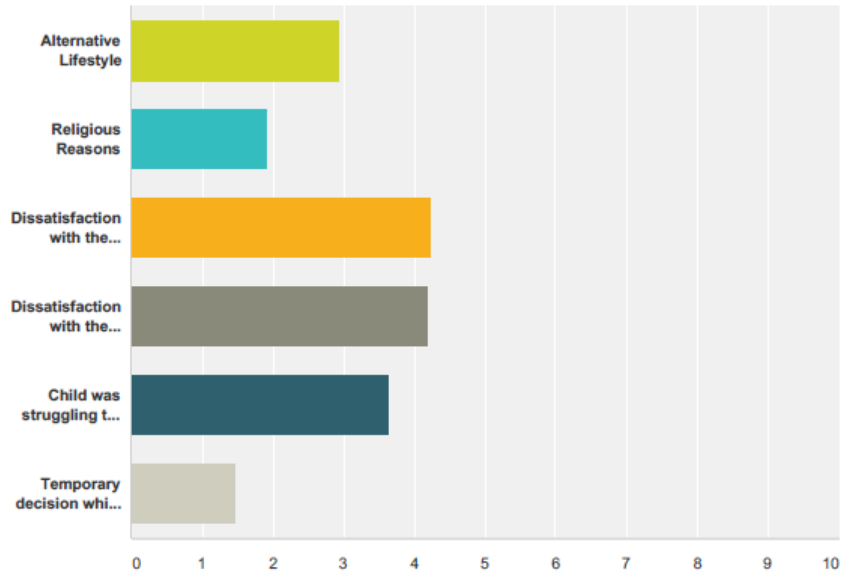
Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	20.83% 15
No	58.33% 42
Not applicable	20.83% 15
Total	72

#	If yes, what do you feel is different and why do you think this might be?	Date
1	Spend more time together	11/14/2016 7:54 PM
2	because I spend more time with them. Their father works away often as salaries in London are better and this facilitates us to be able to home educate. The relationship with him is not better or worse, just different. They have more in depth conversations with me and have more conversations about computer games for example with him.	11/14/2016 8:48 AM
3	grandparents are both phds from oxbridge- husbands parents. very intelligent. one phd is economics, other is physics and was a contemporary of stephen hawking. two youngest want to be home ed and spend time with grandparents! two youngest get annoyed when they have to go to school	8/26/2016 7:13 AM
4	**** is much closer to my wife than me, i feel- we work as a family obviously but my wife being a teacher is the parent who works most closely with ****. i help th eother kids with homework but i feel that my wife and **** have a closer relationship than she does with the other kids.	8/21/2016 6:40 AM
5	I am a single parent. Although I am the main caregiver and therefore educator, my boys education is driven by him and ends up being a bit of a team effort. My friends/family have varied areas of expertise and each has an input. He has good relationships with all.	8/8/2016 11:59 PM
6	I don't regard my self as an 'educator'. I facilitate my children's learning. We (my children and my self) spend nearly all our time together so we have a very strong bond. My husband is around in the evenings, weekends and holidays. He is also very close to our children but freely admits that he's not as closely bonded as I am to them.	8/8/2016 3:55 PM
7	She is a lot closer to me, mainly due to different parenting styles, but also due to me being home full-time and Dad only part-time.	8/8/2016 2:31 PM
8	Closer since we are together all the time.	8/8/2016 2:21 PM

9	Other adults in the home are 2 sisters and a disabled father. Mum is the main carer and source of education and advice so the relationship is strong and co-operative.	7/12/2016 3:53 AM
10	Well yes , I'm his mum and my relationship is clearly different to that of the other adult here- his dad , our relationship has changed since we have been home educating. It has improved and we are much closer.	7/7/2016 9:59 PM
11	I don't feel that my role as mother and educator can be separated. As such my relationship with the children is naturally different to that of their relationship with their Father and Grandmother (both live in the home) because I am their mother.	7/7/2016 12:43 PM
12	Closer, more respectful, more understanding, more forgiving. I think this is due to spending so much time together and working productively together on a joint aim.	7/6/2016 8:35 AM
13	Distance from the mom and dad relationship has been important for our daughter in her academic learning	7/6/2016 6:44 AM
14	She is closer to her mother, but this is more down to characteristics than to being home educated. The relationship maybe closer since home educating as there is even more trust now.	7/6/2016 5:30 AM
15	Yes but not because of the home education. My son is just particularly attached to me, his mother. He has a level of trust and confidence in me and can fully relax with me which I think he cannot do with his father whom he seems to be somewhat in awe of and loves and respects so greatly that he feels under pressure to live up to some expectation there.	7/6/2016 4:30 AM
16	The secondary school aged child is closer to me as we spend more time together. The primary school aged child is equally close to both parents.	7/4/2016 5:25 AM

Q14 Were the following factors influential on your decision to home-educate?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 56



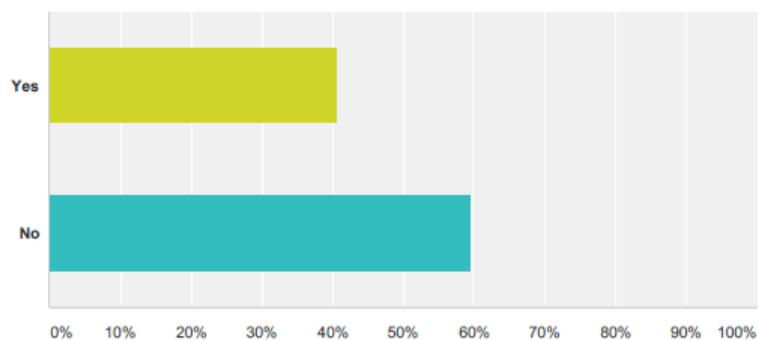
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
Alternative Lifestyle	20.59% 14	8.82% 6	39.71% 27	19.12% 13	11.76% 8	68	2.93
Religious Reasons	63.24% 43	4.41% 3	13.24% 9	14.71% 10	4.41% 3	68	1.93
Dissatisfaction with the school's ability to cater for child's needs	1.45% 1	4.35% 3	14.49% 10	28.99% 20	50.72% 35	69	4.23
Dissatisfaction with the curriculum taught at school	2.94% 2	1.47% 1	16.18% 11	32.35% 22	47.06% 32	68	4.19
Child was struggling to cope with school stressors	11.94% 8	7.46% 5	28.36% 19	10.45% 7	41.79% 28	67	3.63
Temporary decision whilst awaiting a suitable school placement	78.46% 51	1.54% 1	15.38% 10	4.62% 3	0.00% 0	65	1.46

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Inflexibility of schooling system	11/16/2016 12:12 AM
2	The two children have never been to school so school was not a factor for them. We home educate for philosophical reasons as we believe school is not an efficient way to learn. Their older sister did try school and some of the above were factors for her.	11/14/2016 7:59 PM
3	Reduced timetable. 9 hours a week at school, the rest at home.	11/13/2016 8:22 PM
4	Time with children, child decision.	9/2/2016 1:58 PM

5	None of the above response options align with the reason for choosing HE	8/8/2016 3:18 PM
6	Some of these (the Somewhat Disagrees) might have been true if she'd ever been at school. Lack of creativity within the school system - too regimented. Bullying of anyone slightly different is too common. Too much peer pressure, and poor socialization outside of a narrow age range.	8/8/2016 2:41 PM
7	Belief in the value of self-directed learning and of the benefits of an individualised approach to education.	8/8/2016 2:22 PM
8	Eldes did one year at school, youngest never went.	7/28/2016 10:10 AM
9	School refusing to accept that they were the primary cause of anxiety which was resulting in health problems such as psoriasis.	7/28/2016 9:04 AM
10	Disagree with the school education system and the impact on mental health	7/12/2016 6:26 AM
11	Note on religious reasons, we are not religious and I did not want Christianity pushed on my children in school. Main reason, I believe schools are too standardized and not what I want for my children. I want them to have the opportunity to develop their own interests. They have never been in school.	7/12/2016 5:54 AM
12	My son had never liked school but her bag an year 3 with a very strict old fashioned older lady teacher, whom he was quite scared of, this coupled with some changes in his peer group escalated his unhappiness which lead to us removing him from school.	7/7/2016 10:05 PM
13	dyslexia ignored by school	7/6/2016 8:36 AM
14	My son simply did not want to go to school and we were in a position to accommodate that. My husband (a very shy person whom I think my son is more like than myself) remembered the trauma of his first day at school and I remember more traumas than great things of my schooling and I believe I learned very little as a result of my schooling. What I learned, I learned myself outside school. My husband learned a great deal through his schooling. I think he went to a better school but he too has learned a great deal more outside school.	7/6/2016 4:34 AM
15	My daughters school closed down so initially it was a temporary arrangement. She loves it and her brother has chosen to home educate also.	7/4/2016 5:47 AM
16	Children have never been to school. Philosophical decision. Do not give schools or what they do much thought.	7/3/2016 3:07 AM
17	My son has never been to school	6/30/2016 1:18 AM

Q15 Have you chosen to register your child as home-educated with the local authority?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 56



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	40.58%	28
No	59.42%	41
Total		69

Q16 Which local authority do you belong to?

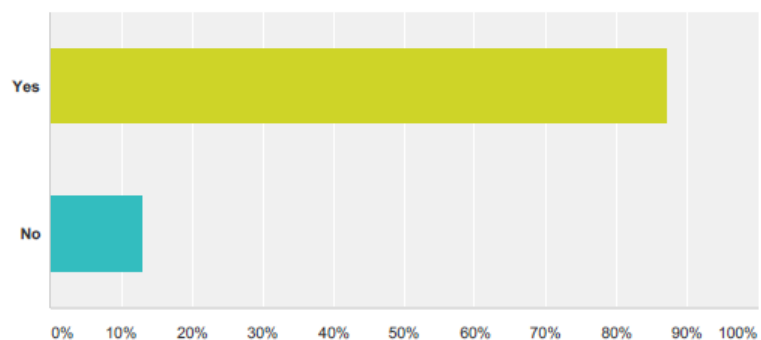
Answered: 56 Skipped: 69

#	Responses	Date
1	Missing value ;)	11/16/2016 12:12 AM
2	Teignbridge	11/14/2016 7:59 PM
3	Devon	11/14/2016 11:58 AM
4	North Devon	11/14/2016 6:00 AM
5	Torbay	11/14/2016 2:02 AM
6	Devon	11/13/2016 8:22 PM
7	Devon	11/13/2016 7:31 PM
8	Devon	11/13/2016 2:53 PM
9	Peterborough	9/4/2016 2:11 AM
10	richmondshire	9/2/2016 2:55 PM
11	Cambridgeshire	9/2/2016 2:03 PM
12	Cambs	9/2/2016 1:58 PM
13	islington	8/26/2016 7:14 AM
14	Hammersmith & Fulham	8/25/2016 12:09 PM
15	Hammersmith and Fulham	8/24/2016 11:37 AM
16	camden	8/22/2016 2:43 AM
17	Camden	8/21/2016 6:40 AM
18	Camden	8/20/2016 10:25 AM
19	Kensington and Chelsea	8/18/2016 7:23 AM
20	Dorset	8/9/2016 3:11 PM
21	Hampshire	8/9/2016 11:37 AM
22	Blackburn with darwen (I answered yes but we had no choice. We deregistered so LEA registration was mandatory)	8/9/2016 12:01 AM
23	I don't belong to a LA. I live in Bristol and nobody is 'registered' to or by an LA	8/8/2016 4:01 PM
24	No there is no obligation to register with the local authority	8/8/2016 3:27 PM
25	refuse to disclose	8/8/2016 3:18 PM
26	Gloucestershire	8/8/2016 2:58 PM
27	Cheshire West & Chester	8/8/2016 2:43 PM
28	Derby.	8/8/2016 2:41 PM
29	Kingston	8/8/2016 2:22 PM
30	Isle of Wight	8/2/2016 10:35 AM
31	Isle of Wight	7/28/2016 12:14 PM
32	Isle of wight	7/28/2016 10:10 AM
33	IOW	7/28/2016 9:04 AM
34	South somerset	7/13/2016 10:07 AM

35	South somerset	7/12/2016 9:12 AM
36	Somerset	7/12/2016 5:54 AM
37	North Devon	7/12/2016 3:54 AM
38	Devon	7/12/2016 3:54 AM
39	Devon	7/12/2016 2:43 AM
40	Hampshire	7/8/2016 12:12 PM
41	west sussex	7/7/2016 11:38 PM
42	Initially we de registered with Poole, however we now live in North Dorset and are "under the radar"m	7/7/2016 10:05 PM
43	Devon county council	7/7/2016 1:01 PM
44	Dorset	7/7/2016 12:44 PM
45	Gloucestershire	7/7/2016 12:15 PM
46	n/a	7/6/2016 5:17 PM
47	Southampton	7/6/2016 8:36 AM
48	Enfield	7/6/2016 6:45 AM
49	rather not say	7/6/2016 6:07 AM
50	essex	7/6/2016 4:53 AM
51	Lancashire County Council	7/6/2016 4:34 AM
52	Bristol	7/6/2016 4:32 AM
53	Exeter	7/4/2016 12:00 PM
54	Torbay	7/4/2016 5:47 AM
55	Torbat	7/4/2016 5:14 AM
56	Devon	7/3/2016 3:07 AM

Q17 Is your decision to home-educate a permanent arrangement?

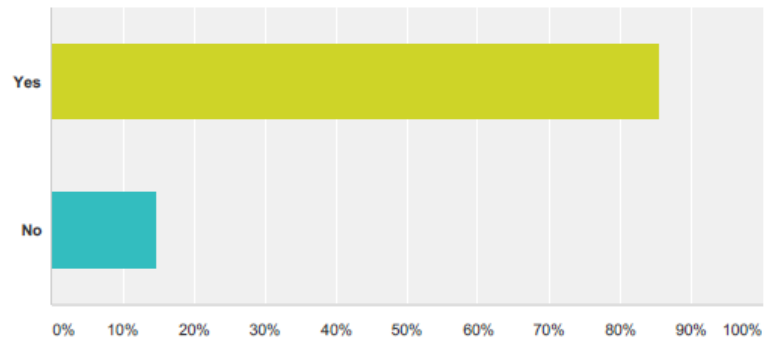
Answered: 69 Skipped: 56



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	86.96% 60
No	13.04% 9
Total	69

Q18 Are you part of a home-educating community/network?

Answered: 68 Skipped: 57



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	85.29%	58
No	14.71%	10
Total		68

Q19 What is the name of the community/support group that you are part of?

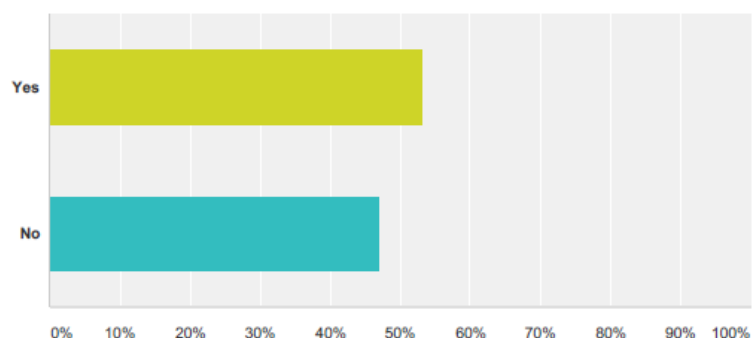
Answered: 47 Skipped: 78

#	Responses	Date
1	missing value :)	11/16/2016 12:12 AM
2	Exhec Exeter home education community Also nationally: AHed Action for Home Education AEUK Autonomous Education UK	11/14/2016 8:02 PM
3	North Devon Christian Home Educators Christian Home Educators Exmoor HE Group Devon Home Educators	11/14/2016 6:03 AM
4	Many face book groups	11/14/2016 2:03 AM
5	Various, local and national	11/13/2016 7:32 PM
6	Exeter Home Ed	11/13/2016 2:55 PM
7	Facebook	9/4/2016 2:11 AM
8	Rather not say	9/2/2016 2:04 PM
9	West Norfolk home educators, Peterborough he, fenland support group.	9/2/2016 1:59 PM
10	prefer not to say	8/25/2016 12:12 PM
11	ham and high home ed community	8/22/2016 2:45 AM
12	Prefer not to say	8/20/2016 10:26 AM
13	Too many to list! And don't understand the next question? Is 'a local initiative' something official,or are you asking if local people used their initiative?	8/9/2016 3:15 PM
14	A multitude of groups in the Solent/South Hampshire area!	8/9/2016 11:43 AM
15	We are part of wider groups like education otherwise but also less formal local groups via social media and local meet ups.	8/9/2016 12:04 AM
16	Many different fb groups & local groups	8/8/2016 3:28 PM
17	There are many	8/8/2016 3:19 PM
18	he-special.org.uk	8/8/2016 2:58 PM
19	East Midlands Christian Home Educators, plus informal network of local home edders who arrange get-togethers.	8/8/2016 2:47 PM
20	Rather not say.	8/8/2016 2:43 PM
21	Several FB and real life groups.	8/8/2016 2:23 PM
22	East Midlands Home Educators	8/8/2016 2:23 PM
23	Isle of Wight Learning Zone	7/28/2016 12:14 PM
24	Learning Zone	7/28/2016 10:11 AM
25	Learning Zone	7/28/2016 9:07 AM
26	Shepton mallet home education group	7/13/2016 10:08 AM
27	HEC	7/12/2016 9:13 AM
28	Exmoor home ed group,	7/12/2016 6:26 AM
29	Bridgwater, Taunton, Oake, Tiverton, Exmoor	7/12/2016 6:05 AM
30	Bridgwater hone ed group Taunton home ed group	7/12/2016 5:55 AM
31	Exmoor Home Education, Home Education Devon.	7/12/2016 3:56 AM
32	Exmoor Home Education Group	7/12/2016 2:44 AM

33	Taunton Home Education	7/12/2016 2:30 AM
34	EtudEO	7/7/2016 11:41 PM
35	We are in about 10 groups but our main group is called Bournemouth Poole and surrounding areas and is a group based on social media.	7/7/2016 10:09 PM
36	Weymouth and South Dorset home educators FB A number of other FB communities also including national camps organised and other wider area groups	7/7/2016 12:46 PM
37	www.he-special.org.uk	7/7/2016 12:15 PM
38	Taunton Home education group	7/6/2016 5:17 PM
39	SEEds	7/6/2016 8:39 AM
40	It's an online group called education everywhere	7/6/2016 6:47 AM
41	Education Everywhere	7/6/2016 6:07 AM
42	most of them	7/6/2016 4:54 AM
43	LEAD (Local Home Educators); BONEHEDS (Local Home Educators); MADCOW (Local Home Educators); HELLO Group (Local Home Educators); Liverpool Group (Local Home Educators); Cumbria Group (Local Home Educators); HE-UK (National Online Networking Group); UK-HE (National Online Networking Group); Lancashire Home Education Forum Group (Local Home Educators); Teen Enterprise Group (Local Home Educators); LCC Consultation Network (Local Council) (I find your next question ambiguous. Do you mean Local Government Initiative? I am a member of many local community/support groups, only one of which has anything to do with the local council -- who only set up the group because HE'ers asked for it. There are many different groups set up by home educators including those for children with Special Needs, single parents, dads, different religions.)	7/6/2016 4:47 AM
44	There are many different groups and networks	7/4/2016 12:01 PM
45	Teignbridge Home educators.	7/4/2016 5:47 AM
46	Exhec	7/3/2016 3:09 AM
47	Flags But I dip. In and out when in the area	6/30/2016 1:19 AM

Q20 Is this group part of a local initiative?

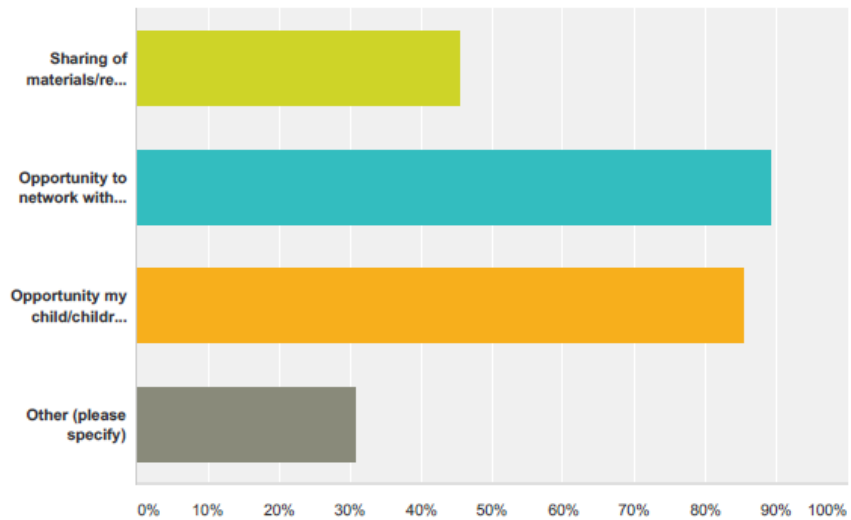
Answered: 51 Skipped: 74



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	52.94%	27
No	47.06%	24
Total		51

Q21 What are your main purposes for involvement with this group? (Please select all that apply)

Answered: 55 Skipped: 70



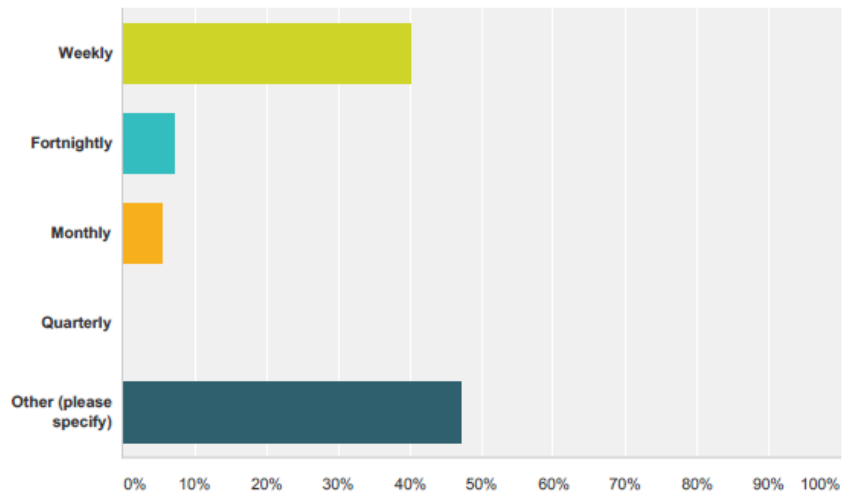
Answer Choices	Responses
Sharing of materials/resources	45.45% 25
Opportunity to network with other home-educators	89.09% 49
Opportunity my child/children to interact with others	85.45% 47
Other (please specify)	30.91% 17
Total Respondents: 55	

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	To support one another, bring group projects together, to save on group outings (groups outside school holidays can save money).	11/14/2016 6:03 AM
2	single parents are unfairly targeted when it comes to academic progress of children, i feel. Our group is made up of many single parents (mostly female but some male). we meet weekly if possible to support each other. all from same two secondary schools in area. will not name for obvious reasons but huge dissatisfaction with sen support at these schools (local authority schools).	8/25/2016 12:12 PM
3	peer 2 peer support for adult home edders	8/22/2016 2:45 AM
4	Demonstrate to LA that a large number of children are much better off than in mainstream school	8/20/2016 10:26 AM
5	Why are you assuming hom-edders only have one main group,therefore only one main reason?	8/9/2016 3:15 PM
6	Group learning opportunities, scope to mentor new HE families, utilising teaching strengths of all parents	8/9/2016 11:43 AM
7	Many reasons	8/8/2016 3:19 PM
8	support for children with SEND	8/8/2016 2:58 PM
9	Opportunity for group working.	8/8/2016 2:47 PM

10	Social	7/12/2016 5:55 AM
11	To enable my H.E children to have the same learning opportunities as their schooled peers.	7/7/2016 11:41 PM
12	Access to group events we organize more cheaply than going as an individual family	7/6/2016 8:39 AM
13	Support in making various choices and connection with others experiencing this	7/6/2016 6:47 AM
14	To know that I am not alone when I have difficulties or need support	7/6/2016 6:07 AM
15	Keeping up with threats to home education through (almost continuous) attempts by Government - both local and central - to interfere and counteracting those measures.	7/6/2016 4:47 AM
16	To offer advise and support to others	7/4/2016 5:15 AM
17	To support new hone educators and give them accurate info regarding the law etc. How to deal with authorities acting ultra vires.	7/3/2016 3:09 AM

Q22 How often does the group meet?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 70



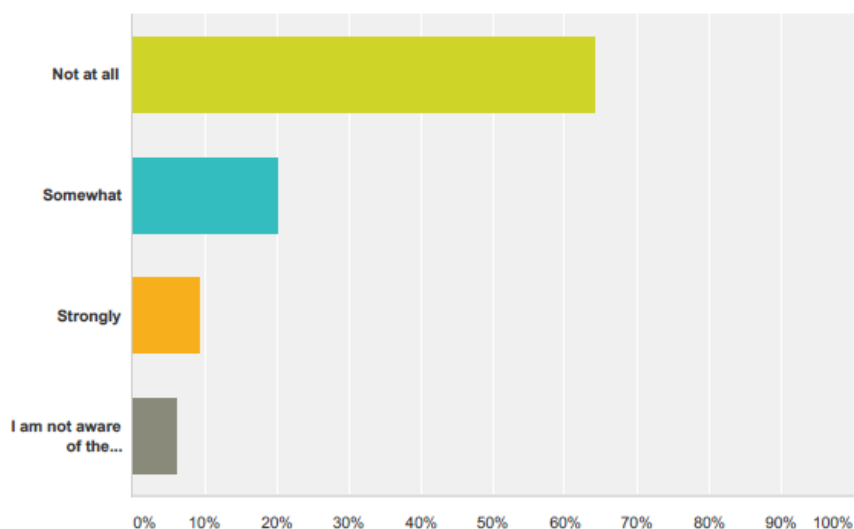
Answer Choices	Responses
Weekly	40.00% 22
Fortnightly	7.27% 4
Monthly	5.45% 3
Quarterly	0.00% 0
Other (please specify)	47.27% 26
Total	55

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Member of more than one group	11/16/2016 12:12 AM
2	there are several groups in Exeter and Devon	11/14/2016 8:02 PM
3	Whenever you like	11/14/2016 2:03 AM
4	depends what you are interested in	11/13/2016 2:55 PM
5	Varies depending on what's going on.	9/2/2016 2:04 PM
6	this is silly.we have lots of groups for lots of reasons who meet at different times!	8/9/2016 3:15 PM
7	Some weekly, some fortnightly, some monthly	8/9/2016 11:43 AM
8	There are opportunities to meet several times a week sometimes depending on local events/weather. We chose to attend when events are of interest.	8/9/2016 12:04 AM
9	It varies depending on what we want to take part in	8/8/2016 3:28 PM
10	Sporadically	8/8/2016 3:19 PM
11	It is an online community	8/8/2016 2:58 PM
12	One monthly, informal group is 2 or 3 times a month, some visits are occasional.	8/8/2016 2:47 PM

13	Several times a week.	8/8/2016 2:43 PM
14	Various	8/8/2016 2:23 PM
15	varies	7/28/2016 12:14 PM
16	Regularly	7/28/2016 10:11 AM
17	As and when. Events are organised as a gift between members. There are two meets on a weekly basis (one is term time only). There are classes that run during term time for those who are interested.	7/28/2016 9:07 AM
18	Group meets regularly but I do not attend all meetings	7/12/2016 6:26 AM
19	We do something every week but using a number of groups	7/12/2016 6:05 AM
20	4 days a week for 6 blocks a year	7/7/2016 11:41 PM
21	Almost daily as there are different activities daily and if anyone individually wants to meet up they can arrange a venue	7/7/2016 10:09 PM
22	every day term time, something is on offer and sometimes up to 5 different things	7/6/2016 8:39 AM
23	Regular daily post communication usually	7/6/2016 6:47 AM
24	online network	7/6/2016 6:07 AM
25	different groups have different meeting frequencies	7/6/2016 4:54 AM
26	There are weekly, fortnightly and monthly meetings of different groups. There are one-off events and activities and meetings. The meetings with the local council are supposed to be 1 per term but they are very sloppy about organising them.	7/6/2016 4:47 AM

Q23 To what extent do you feel government legislation dictates the educational content you teach your child/children?

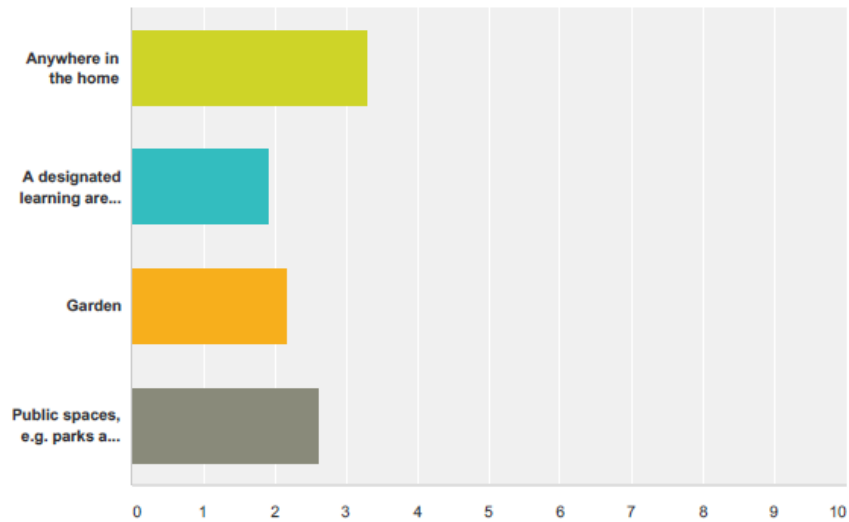
Answered: 64 Skipped: 61



Answer Choices	Responses
Not at all	64.06% 41
Somewhat	20.31% 13
Strongly	9.38% 6
I am not aware of the government legislation.	6.25% 4
Total	64

Q24 Where do the majority of your child's learning experiences take place? Please rank the following items with 1 being where most of the learning experience take place and 4 where least occur.

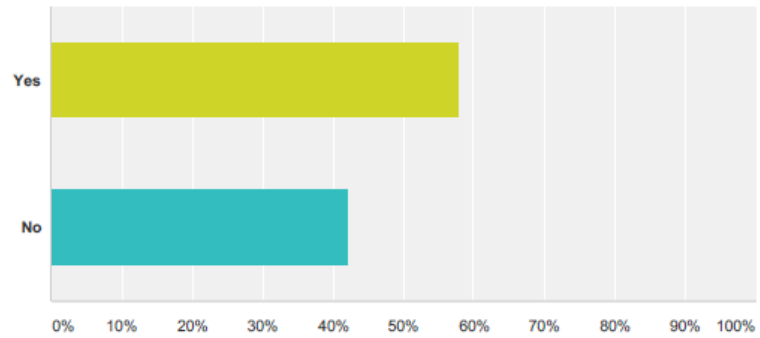
Answered: 64 Skipped: 61



	1	2	3	4	Total	Score
Anywhere in the home	56.25% 36	26.56% 17	7.81% 5	9.38% 6	64	3.30
A designated learning area in the home	23.44% 15	4.69% 3	12.50% 8	59.38% 38	64	1.92
Garden	3.13% 2	28.13% 18	51.56% 33	17.19% 11	64	2.17
Public spaces, e.g. parks and museums	17.19% 11	40.63% 26	28.13% 18	14.06% 9	64	2.61

Q25 Has your home-educated child ever attended school?

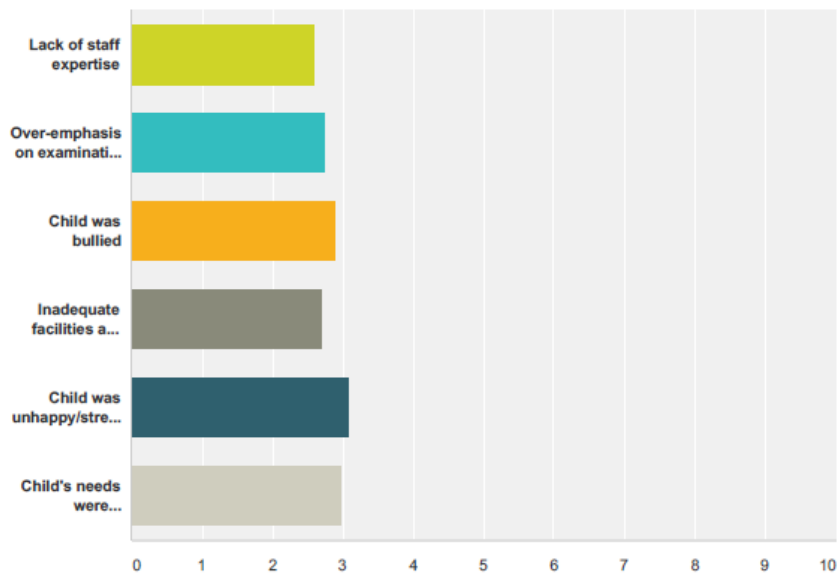
Answered: 64 Skipped: 61



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	57.81%	37
No	42.19%	27
Total		64

Q26 Were any of the following factors influential in your decision to opt out of schooling?

Answered: 64 Skipped: 61



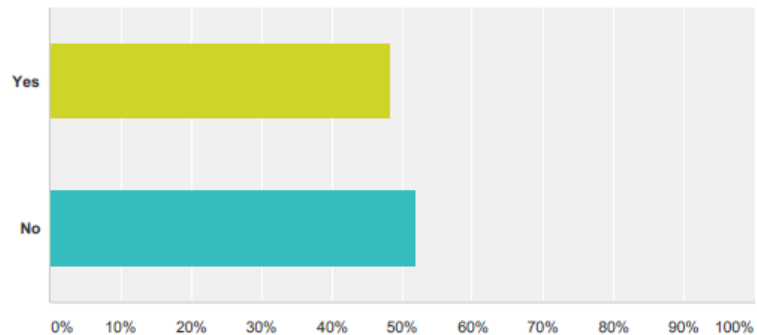
	Not at all influential	Somewhat influential	Strongly influential	Not applicable	Total	Weighted Average
Lack of staff expertise	17.19% 11	34.38% 22	21.88% 14	26.56% 17	64	2.58
Over-emphasis on examination based curriculum	4.69% 3	29.69% 19	53.13% 34	12.50% 8	64	2.73
Child was bullied	23.44% 15	10.94% 7	18.75% 12	46.88% 30	64	2.89
Inadequate facilities at school	20.31% 13	21.88% 14	26.56% 17	31.25% 20	64	2.69
Child was unhappy/stressed	7.81% 5	9.38% 6	50.00% 32	32.81% 21	64	3.08
Child's needs were misunderstood	10.94% 7	12.50% 8	43.75% 28	32.81% 21	64	2.98

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	My children have never been to school, however I and my partner felt the above about our own school experiences	11/15/2016 1:04 AM
2	Christian content taken out of school. Lots of govt intervention on social content (e.g sex education) that I believe is the parents responsibility.	11/14/2016 6:06 AM
3	i felt that the particular school was unable to understand @@@@s needs. poor sen support, although the senco was/is great- too busy and her time always diverted to management tasks.	8/25/2016 12:15 PM

4	I like my children.we enjoyed learning about the world together when they were very small,didn't see why I should hand them over to random strangers I cannot choose to mould their self worth and views of the world just because a birthday passed	8/9/2016 3:18 PM
5	We did not look in to schools at all, this was not a decision based on how "bad" schools were, rather on the merits of home education.	8/9/2016 11:44 AM
6	The waiting list for services in our area is stretched. The focus is on high need cases and i was not willing to wait and see when might happen.	8/9/2016 12:11 AM
7	She was very unhappy, and couldn't communicate her feelings to staff. When she managed to communicate they didn't care enough to help her.	8/2/2016 10:39 AM
8	School failed to communicate adequately which lead directly to health problems. Then tried to claim we were responsible for problems they had caused.	7/28/2016 9:12 AM
9	Very strict, uncaring teachers expecting a huge amount from a four year old. Lack of flexibility.	7/13/2016 10:11 AM
10	The content of the curriculum is not designed to give a balanced education	7/12/2016 3:57 AM
11	Ridiculous rules regarding children taking time off for educational holidays and family time.	7/12/2016 2:32 AM
12	A lack of understanding / connection with my child that is almost certainly bound to be present due to him being part of such a large group of children being taught	7/7/2016 10:15 PM
13	I couldn't find a school that could meet the needs of a bright child with SEN.	7/7/2016 12:17 PM
14	My son did not want to go - Strongly Influential - actually the main overriding reason. Extensive research into education: the current system, past systems, the alternative systems and how children learn combined with my own experiences and observations - Strongly influential.	7/6/2016 4:57 AM
15	My eldest child did go to school until she was 9. She is now at Uni. I pulled her out of school for many of those reasons. But those reasons are not applicable to my children who have never been.	7/3/2016 3:12 AM

Q27 Has your child remained in contact with their peers from school?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 71



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	48.15%	26
No	51.85%	28
Total		54

#	If yes, how regular does your child have contact with their school based peers?	Date
1	Not applicable	11/16/2016 12:14 AM
2	Our children have lots of friends who are in schools even though theyve never been themselves. They see friends most days usually in one group or another.	11/15/2016 1:04 AM
3	N/a	11/14/2016 8:04 PM
4	Weekly with some of them.	11/14/2016 12:00 PM
5	Some more than others. Weekly	11/14/2016 2:05 AM
6	Play dates, birthdays, local events	11/13/2016 2:59 PM
7	Monthly	9/2/2016 2:02 PM
8	many of them are part of our group. we meet at each others homes and the children see each other then; once or twice weekly.	8/25/2016 12:15 PM
9	weekly play-dates (primary age child) and sleep-overs/weekend activities (secondary age children)	8/18/2016 7:24 AM
10	I run an out of school provision in the school he attended so unless he has other activities four/five days a week for up to three hours a day in term time and full days and trips out in holiday times.	8/9/2016 12:11 AM
11	Daily	8/8/2016 3:29 PM
12	not applicable	8/8/2016 3:21 PM
13	She meets with one schooled friend once or twice each holiday, and regularly plays with other schooled kids who live locally (several times a week in good weather).	8/8/2016 2:50 PM
14	Every weekend and several times a week during the holidays.	8/8/2016 2:45 PM
15	Didn't go to school.	8/8/2016 2:24 PM
16	Fortnightly on average	7/28/2016 10:12 AM

17	Not relevant? He was the only child in his year in a specialist unit within a primary school. He has remained in contact with other children from the school but from different years and outside the unit.	7/28/2016 9:12 AM
18	Na	7/12/2016 6:27 AM
19	Schooled in a different area (Hampshire) so too far	7/12/2016 6:08 AM
20	Not applicable, never been in school	7/12/2016 5:56 AM
21	Physically, most weekends and when friends are on school holidays. Over social media most evenings.	7/12/2016 3:59 AM
22	2-3 days a week at school.	7/12/2016 3:57 AM
23	2-3 times a year	7/12/2016 2:46 AM
24	One particular child is still his best friend and the contact is often daily Skype.	7/7/2016 10:15 PM
25	When she feels like it which can range from weekly contact via texting or meeting up which maybe once every few weeks.	7/6/2016 6:08 AM
26	N/a My child never went to school.	7/6/2016 4:57 AM
27	weekly	7/6/2016 4:55 AM
28	n/a - child never attended school but is friends with peers who do go to school	7/4/2016 12:02 PM
29	Weekly	7/4/2016 5:49 AM
30	N/A	6/30/2016 1:21 AM

Q28 How do you feel your decision to home-educate has affected the relationships between siblings within your household, if at all?

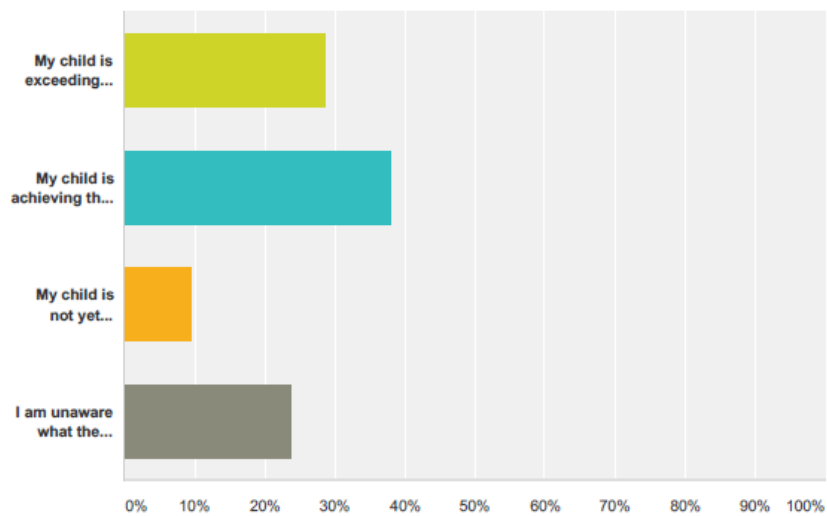
Answered: 64 Skipped: 61

#	Responses	Date
1	Hasn't	1/11/2017 4:11 AM
2	no	11/27/2016 10:18 AM
3	N/A	11/16/2016 12:14 AM
4	They have a very close friendship as well as being siblings.	11/15/2016 1:05 AM
5	I think they possibly have a closer relationship than they would had they attended school. Not segregated by age.	11/14/2016 8:06 PM
6	Positively, they get on well.	11/14/2016 12:02 PM
7	It has grown stronger and there is more understanding. They support one another. They get to see each other more!	11/14/2016 6:09 AM
8	Initial jealousy followed by acceptance	11/14/2016 3:36 AM
9	Closer as spend more time together and have to learn to solve differences despite age gap.	11/13/2016 7:35 PM
10	Not at all	11/13/2016 3:20 PM
11	Not applicable	11/13/2016 3:01 PM
12	q	11/13/2016 11:48 AM
13	not at all	10/14/2016 8:25 AM
14	They argue a lot!	9/4/2016 2:13 AM
15	They have what I would consider a 'usual' relationship. For the most part they get on well, play together etc, but of course there are moments of friction too.	9/2/2016 2:59 PM
16	Much stronger relationships have been formed.	9/2/2016 2:07 PM
17	Closer	9/2/2016 2:02 PM
18	refer to previous answer: they love ---- but seem to be resentful that he can be at home and 'still be at school'!	8/26/2016 7:16 AM
19	not applicable only the one child	8/25/2016 12:16 PM
20	not at all	8/24/2016 11:39 AM
21	-	8/22/2016 2:47 AM
22	**** is oldest, so *** and ***** understand his needs as much as kids their age can. They sometimes resist going to school, but we don't feel they resent **** for being at home	8/21/2016 6:44 AM
23	n/a	8/20/2016 10:27 AM
24	Made them closer, more tolerant of each other	8/18/2016 7:25 AM
25	Yes! Hugely close. 7 & 18. Learning from each other all the time! Such a lot of laughter and respe	8/9/2016 3:21 PM
26	Extremely positive, they rarely argue and are best friends. Everyone attributes this to them having spent their entire lives together with no childcare outside the home	8/9/2016 11:45 AM
27	No siblings	8/9/2016 12:11 AM
28	They get along better	8/8/2016 3:30 PM
29	not applicable	8/8/2016 3:21 PM
30	no siblings	8/8/2016 3:00 PM
31	N/A	8/8/2016 2:50 PM

32	N/A	8/8/2016 2:45 PM
33	United us all as a family.	8/8/2016 2:28 PM
34	Less competitive and better relationships between them.	8/8/2016 2:25 PM
35	Both were HE-ed at some point. My son returned to school aged 13, did well and enjoyed it. My daughter tried, it was horrible. He's glad to see her getting better and happy again. They spent several years being HE-ed together and are close because of that. They're aware of each others' quirks and strengths and admire each others' skills, asking each other for practical help and advice quite often.	8/2/2016 10:46 AM
36	not applicable	7/28/2016 12:16 PM
37	They spend more time together which they enjoy, bar some bickering	7/28/2016 10:30 AM
38	It's improved all our relationships due to the reduction in his anxiety.	7/28/2016 9:14 AM
39	Much improved.	7/13/2016 10:13 AM
40	Siblings are close and get on well - much more than friends schooled children seem to get on.	7/12/2016 9:15 AM
41	Elder son completed schooling, very detrimental to his mental health. They have a very positive relationships	7/12/2016 6:28 AM
42	They're much closer and are best friends. They have an amazing relationship	7/12/2016 6:09 AM
43	Closer because spend more time together	7/12/2016 5:57 AM
44	Because child is more relaxed and able to regulate their emotions, the sibling relationships are stronger. Being adults and having their own valuable skills, siblings help provide a wider range of education by teaching things mum can't.	7/12/2016 4:02 AM
45	Superbly. Their time together has enriched their relationship far more than if they were at school more often.	7/12/2016 4:00 AM
46	Stronger relationship	7/12/2016 2:46 AM
47	N/A	7/12/2016 2:33 AM
48	They have a closer relationship	7/7/2016 11:44 PM
49	We have a grown up son who was anti home ed initially but now is very supportive	7/7/2016 10:18 PM
50	Closer	7/7/2016 1:04 PM
51	They work together well and when we travel they're a very cohesive group. They are intimately aware of each other's needs and are able to allow sufficient 1:1 time spent with me. They can still bicker at times and sibling rivalry to still exists.	7/7/2016 12:49 PM
52	There are no other siblings	7/7/2016 12:18 PM
53	No siblings	7/6/2016 5:19 PM
54	The household had to rearrange its relationships and this took some time to settle but it was so much better with out school stress flowing into the home.	7/6/2016 8:44 AM
55	Hard at first as her older brother still at school...tricky for him to understand ..has gotten better as time has gone on	7/6/2016 6:50 AM
56	I don't think there is any difference, my eldest wants to be at school for the social contact but knows she could home ed if she wanted to.	7/6/2016 6:08 AM
57	No siblings - however - lots of problems from other families in the street. Your next questions answers do not allow for the answer I would give which is that in some areas - e.g. English Language my child is exceeding age-related expectations but in others - e.g. Maths, he is not yet achieving age-related expectations.	7/6/2016 5:01 AM
58	Siblings squabble whether they're in school or home educated :)	7/6/2016 4:56 AM
59	n/a	7/4/2016 12:03 PM
60	Brought them closer together.	7/4/2016 5:49 AM
61	I don't think it has altered them. It means that the secondary school aged child is not too tired after a day at school to spend time having fun with her younger siblings, but that is the only real difference. They have remained very close rather than drifting apart due to busy and tiring school demands.	7/4/2016 5:30 AM
62	They're bond is stronger now, as they spend a lot of time together.	7/4/2016 5:22 AM
63	They get on well. I think it seems positive and caring	7/3/2016 3:14 AM
64	My other children are adults and have expressed that they would of liked to have been home educated too seeing how well Dan is achieving and is happy and following his interests	6/30/2016 1:25 AM

Q29 How do you think your home-educated child/children's academic progress compares with age-related expectations?

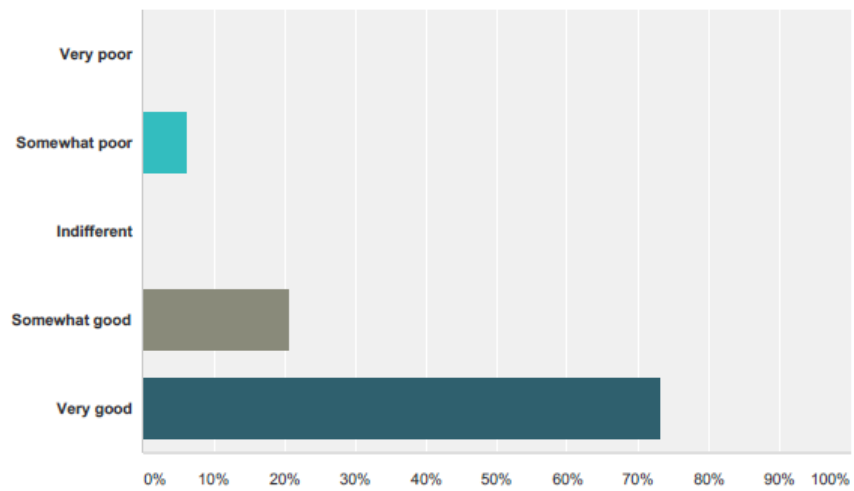
Answered: 63 Skipped: 62



Answer Choices	Responses	
My child is exceeding age-related expectations.	28.57%	18
My child is achieving the age-related expectations.	38.10%	24
My child is not yet achieving age-related expectations.	9.52%	6
I am unaware what the age-related expectations are.	23.81%	15
Total		63

Q30 How would you rate your home-educated child/children's self-esteem?

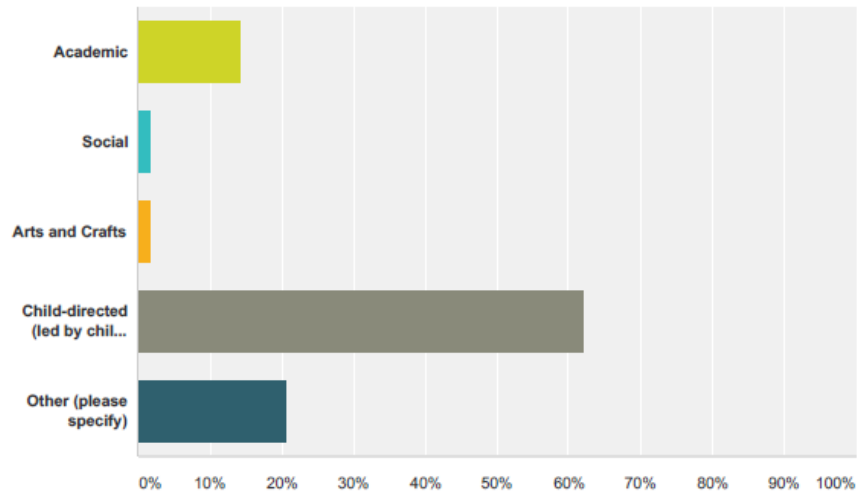
Answered: 63 Skipped: 62



Answer Choices	Responses	
Very poor	0.00%	0
Somewhat poor	6.35%	4
Indifferent	0.00%	0
Somewhat good	20.63%	13
Very good	73.02%	46
Total		63

Q31 What is the main focus of your educational programme at home?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 62

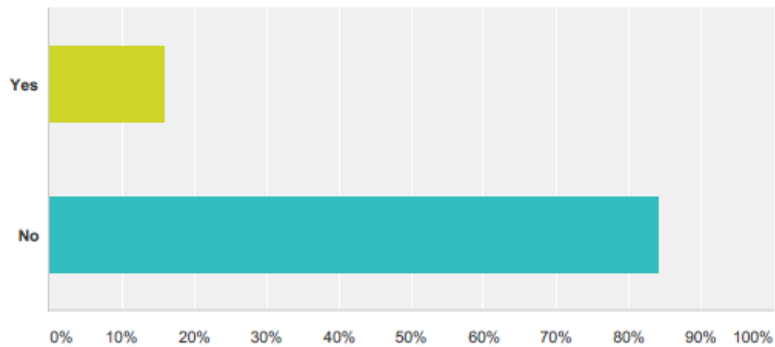


Answer Choices	Responses
Academic	14.29% 9
Social	1.59% 1
Arts and Crafts	1.59% 1
Child-directed (led by child's interests)	61.90% 39
Other (please specify)	20.63% 13
Total	63

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Balanced theme based learning - all subjects covered.	11/14/2016 6:09 AM
2	Islamic faith based firstly then national curriculum	8/24/2016 11:39 AM
3	humanist liberal values	8/22/2016 2:47 AM
4	we try to use the Charlotte mason approach,with some atelier influence.	8/9/2016 3:21 PM
5	Don't have a main focus	8/8/2016 3:30 PM
6	all of the above	8/8/2016 3:21 PM
7	She's keeping up with the basics because she wants to start college part-time. Mostly art-y. Devours book. We working on her well-being right now.	8/2/2016 10:46 AM
8	Child led but with focus on, social interaction, anxiety reduction and physical coordination	7/28/2016 9:14 AM
9	academic maths and English. then child directed	7/12/2016 5:57 AM
10	A combination. Child-lead, but with a tendency towards the academic.	7/12/2016 4:00 AM
12	All of these	7/6/2016 8:44 AM
13	we do maths, english and reading daily and child led for rest	6/30/2016 1:25 AM

Q32 Do you currently have/or have you had any involvement from Educational Psychologists?

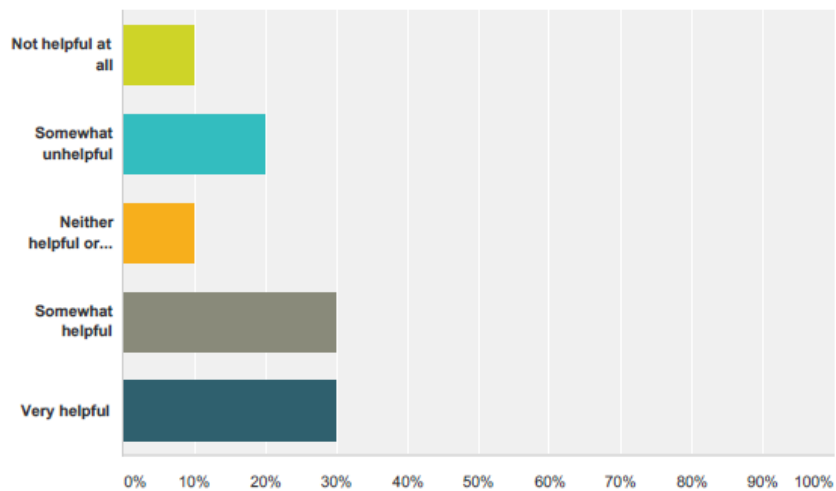
Answered: 63 Skipped: 62



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	15.87% 10
No	84.13% 53
Total	63

Q33 How helpful did you find their advice?

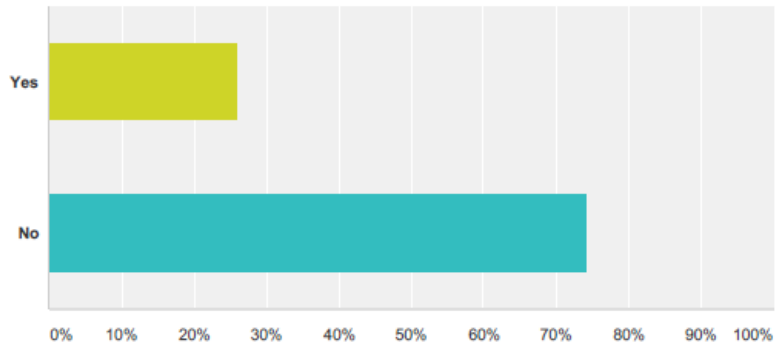
Answered: 10 Skipped: 115



Answer Choices	Responses
Not helpful at all	10.00% 1
Somewhat unhelpful	20.00% 2
Neither helpful or unhelpful	10.00% 1
Somewhat helpful	30.00% 3
Very helpful	30.00% 3
Total	10

Q34 Has your local authority offered you any support as a home-educator?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 63



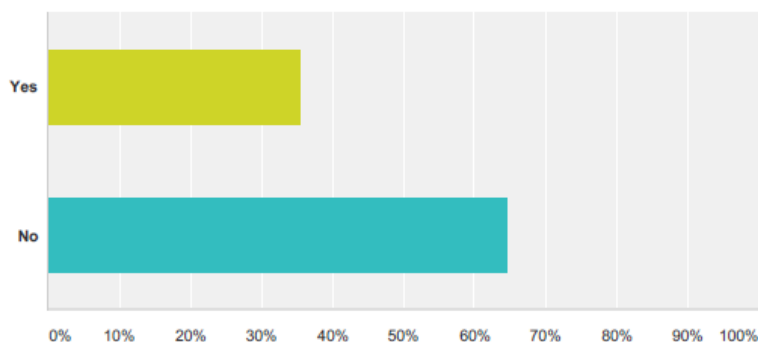
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	25.81%	16
No	74.19%	46
Total		62

#	Please add any relevant comments.	Date
1	N/A below the radar	11/16/2016 12:15 AM
2	N/A as a) we do not have involvement with the LA and b) we do not require support as I do not think that is the function of the LA.	11/14/2016 8:09 PM
3	Caused me more heartache - judgmental, opinionated, biased and unprofessional. A gentleman was sent who both did not like Christians or Home Educators!!	11/14/2016 6:13 AM
4	We are regularly intouch	11/13/2016 3:04 PM
5	Haha! They sent a pack suggesting that the library is a useful resource!please..!	8/9/2016 3:24 PM
6	Our local authority is very supportive of home education but we have had no need to ask them for any assistance up to this point.	8/9/2016 11:46 AM
7	We were in seen towards the end of his school time and there was an amount of cross over when we started HE. A lady came to our home and was helpful and supportive and we were referred for diagnosis and to a clinical setting. They were not supportive and refused to do any work with him. I was told he was much more confident and social but that he needed to be in school to be socialised correctly! I was not willing to do this as I found this change to have occurred after removal from school.	8/9/2016 12:23 AM
8	Advice over the phone/email	8/8/2016 3:31 PM
9	We made use of the home education library service	8/8/2016 3:01 PM
10	I was reported to LA by social services so now have to have contact. Support getting her into school was offered if I wanted, and the EHE helped me explain the limit of what was required of me to a child protection conference, but no other support.	8/8/2016 2:55 PM

11	The individuals we've met have been understanding and kind. They have nothing practical to offer us, though. When I wanted to get my son assessed (possible dyslexia, ASD, etc) the LEAs educational psychologist refused to see him unless I put him in school. He was very rude and implied that I'd caused the issues, despite the fact my son was struggling at school until the age of 7 when I withdrew him. When he chose to go to school as a teen, the SENCo wouldn't push for him to be assessed- so we paid privately. The assessment went as we'd expected and a new school accommodated his educational needs. He did well :) We're low income, and for various reasons we now hire a tutor. I'd really like some financial help with that!	8/2/2016 11:03 AM
12	Relevant person at local authority supportive but hasn't actually got anything to offer. We had to arrange and pay for exams ourselves, including special arrangements to deal with disability.	7/28/2016 12:18 PM
13	Yes, they offered, but the support consists of telling us there is no support LOL	7/28/2016 9:19 AM
14	They know we flexi-school. They are just incompetent. However, we could ask if we wanted help, i am sure.	7/12/2016 4:02 AM
15	Initially when we deregistered we had a LA visit which I felt was very helpful. It validated what I was doing and gave me motivation and confidence. However I have changed my opinion of so many things and learnt so much myself since home educating, a visit from someone from the LA now would no doubt not be helpful. The only support offered is "an inspection visit "	7/7/2016 10:26 PM
16	We are not known to the LA. In the past we have been known by a different LA but absolutely no support was offered.	7/7/2016 12:50 PM
17	We used to go to a home education social group and they would send along materials, and we have also had a meeting with the over 16s officer (formerly Connexions) who arranged a taster day with the Prince's Trust. Although we haven't been able to take it up, we know that they offer college places too.	7/7/2016 12:19 PM
18	They don't have money to be able to inspect us but they are willing for us to contact them with issues. They also did fund 5 iGCSEs (but this is the last year due to funding). They supply school nurse events and we have used various departments to give us talks (eg open spaces, waste recycling, library service).	7/6/2016 8:50 AM
19	Our local authority has always been easy to communicate with and helpful	7/6/2016 6:51 AM
20	There has been no contact from my local authority.	7/6/2016 6:08 AM
21	Note on the previous question: Do you currently have/or have you had any involvement from Educational Psychologists? As I volunteer to help other HE families, I have had involvement with an Ed Psych on behalf of 6 other children but not in relation to my own child. I am officially an unknown to our Local Authority. However, as I have been involved in trying to improve the relationship between them and Home Educators for the past 7 years, they have met me and my son on numerous occasions. The Local Authority initially were obstructive and dishonest when dealing with HE'ers but over time (with a lot of time and very hard work and support from HE'ers across the world! - which reminds me - the question relating to group membership - I am on the Europe Group as well - an initiative of local home educators) we have managed to refine procedures and documentation to be much better. However, the only support they offer is coming out to check on families and give them a letter stating that they have no concerns over the HE - useful for HE hostile family members and limited brochures on things like the law and taking exams. They might give a few links to educational sites but their policy is to not recommend external sites. People have remarked that the links they hand out are "rather young" - tends to be BBC bitesize and things people can find for themselves anyway. There is no tangible help provided in terms of swimming lessons, music lessons, exam fees (or even centres) or anything like that - no help to get analysis for Special Needs - no access to the schools library system. They have put on numerous 'drop-in' sessions to appear to be providing support but don't really do much other than show off the County's services - e.g. music, outdoor activity centre, libraries. The one thing they do that does seem to be well received by home educators is a further education day periodically where they invite representatives from local colleges to come and put up a stall and home educators can talk to them. The Museums service are very accommodating and will put on HE sessions for the same price as school children have to pay. The library service will not provide us with extra loans. The council were working on an online training course for external agencies - e.g. the health service and police who tend to misunderstand HE but unfortunately, round after round of cuts and re-structures have resulted in this grinding to a halt. They also were, for a very short time, providing access to a careers database for known HE children over a certain age but the funding for this has now gone.	7/6/2016 5:22 AM
22	They offer it on their site and elsewhere, but haven't approached us directly to offer support.	7/6/2016 4:57 AM
23	Just an initial visit. Seemed very supportive.	7/4/2016 5:53 AM
24	When we first de registered our eldest child, the LA contacted us. We refused a visit from them and they said "ok, we're here if you need anything"	7/4/2016 5:26 AM
25	I do not want any. The LA behaves randomly depending on who they meet. As a support group we hear all sorts of horror stories. Until LAs start acting within their remit I want nothing to do with them. There is nothing they can offer that the home ed community cannot offer.	7/3/2016 3:17 AM
26	Nobody has even been in touch. I informed them but no response.	6/30/2016 1:26 AM

Q35 As a home-educator, is there any support you would like from your local authority which you feel you are not receiving?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 63



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	35.48% 22
No	64.52% 40
Total	62

#	Please add any relevant comments.	Date
1	Less invasion, more support	1/11/2017 4:12 AM
2	The LA should: - be clear and honest about the option to home ed - provide a public list of exam centres who take independent candidates - properly fund libraries	11/15/2016 1:08 AM
3	Some financial - happy to be income based but the home educator does save the local authorities thousands each year. I have an autistic son who needs specialist help and would like access to some of this. Also the ability to pay for GCSE's or other qualifications that are offered in school for free.	11/14/2016 6:13 AM
4	No interest in involvement from the LA. Their expertise is only in school-based education.	11/13/2016 7:43 PM
5	When our daughter was in school she received a pupil premium for the school £1900 a year for school to support her and we are not entitled to any of this.	11/13/2016 3:04 PM
6	Financial support such as discounts, free curriculums and resources, free entry to placed	9/4/2016 2:14 AM
7	Financing of GCSEs	9/2/2016 2:03 PM
8	i think that h and f need to appreciate that the decision to home ed is not taken lightly, or done for 'hippy' reasons. my child was having a terrible time at school- classes too big, too disrupted, teachers always being replaced by locum teachers etc. complex mental health issues meant that they were struggling to even be in the building and on the site. h and f just see absentees or 'non-authorized absences'. I authorized the absences, as a mother worried sick for her child! home ed has literally been a life saver for @@@@. h and f as an authority do not seem to understand this, literally my child's life has been saved by being taught at home by me.	8/25/2016 12:20 PM
9	Only in the sense that we would like it to be made easier not more difficult to home educate. We as parents know whats best for our children not the local authority	8/20/2016 10:29 AM
10	Access to some of the many thousands of pounds I save the LEA by not sending them to school! Discount for courses,materials,access to a bank of tutors? We pay for all this ourselves,sharing these expensive resources	8/9/2016 3:24 PM

11	Since removing my son from school I have finished an education studies degree and a masters in the psychology of education. I feel I no longer need the support of an LEA with no understanding of our situation or their statutory obligations. However, this is not the case for other parents who feel as lost and unsupported as I did when we first made the decision. It is unfortunately not the norm. And often seen as radical, odd or not in the interest of the child. It is viewed by our LEA and I suspect others as a child abuse risk factor and parents are treated as such with pressure to take another school place given from all services. This requires change and LEA's require an education on this.	8/9/2016 12:23 AM
12	input from educational psychologists and occupational therapists even when there is no EHCP	8/8/2016 3:01 PM
13	See last answer. It's tricky. We'd like some help. But if we ask will they say we're not coping? Parents of schooled children get 5/6 hours a day freed up to get on top of tasks, work etc. no questions asked. I'd like a slice of that pie.	8/2/2016 11:03 AM
14	Practical and financial help in arranging for special access arrangements for exams.	7/28/2016 12:18 PM
15	Clear information on what resources are available and at what ages. E.G. we get very conflicting information about courses at the local college depending on who we speak with. Financial help for things which would be accessible at school but are withdrawn because we have 'elected' to HE (yeah, right, like the school was so brilliant that this was in any way, shape or form a 'choice')	7/28/2016 9:19 AM
16	I feel they should offer everyone support. It currently seems to be very random as to who is contacted and who isn't.	7/13/2016 10:15 AM
17	Other than financial... Vouchers for trips, stationary or online educational programmes would be good.	7/12/2016 9:16 AM
18	At a much later date, funding for an HE exam centre	7/12/2016 6:10 AM
19	The only thing that would make things easier would some kind of grant for equipment - such as physics and chemistry lab equipment.	7/12/2016 4:02 AM
20	Should they wish to take them, I feel that H.E children should be able to sit their exams free of charge, the same as their schooled peers.	7/7/2016 11:47 PM
21	Only in the form of money /tokens to pay for the many activities we attend. I'm aware that somewhere in the ether there's a budget for my son that I could be using for him.	7/7/2016 10:26 PM
22	The ability to take exams in local schools - why couldn't we join in taking exams they are already running?. Funding for iGCSEs to continue.	7/6/2016 8:50 AM
23	I want nothing at all from the local authority. I think if we ask for anything they are justified in asking us to 'jump through hoops' to justify their spending. I think the department as it currently stands is overkill - using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. They just need 1 admin person answering the phone, telling potential HE'ers about the law, perhaps making the enquiries where there are reports of no suitable education or where family members or neighbours are being awkward. There is no requirement to monitor HE on a regular basis. The responsibility for a child's education resides with the parents and has nothing to do with the LA.	7/6/2016 5:22 AM
24	You can't get support without strings. They'll want to register you, monitor you and otherwise interfere.	7/6/2016 4:57 AM
25	Equivalent funding to what she would be receiving at school ;) Obviously I don't actually expect £5000 per year or whatever it is, but perhaps a percentage of this in vouchers which could be redeemed against educational activities (museum tours, aquarium tours etc) which kids who attend school can go on for free (funded by government)	7/4/2016 12:05 PM
26	Links to educational provision other than schools. Financial help towards costs of home ed. Discounts to local leisure facilities etc. Perhaps a mentoring scheme where experienced home educators can support new families.	7/4/2016 5:53 AM
27	We are home educating out of choice. Input from the LA is not needed, if you're not following a curriculum. I feel it would only be needed if you were planning to send your child back to school.	7/4/2016 5:26 AM

Q36 What are your hopes and aspirations for your home-educated child/children?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 63

#	Responses	Date
1	To do well	1/11/2017 4:12 AM
2	Happiness	11/27/2016 10:18 AM
3	Happy, healthy, kind, able to fit into adult life and support self emotionally and financially in the future	11/16/2016 12:16 AM
4	That they'll have happy, satisfied and productive lives.	11/15/2016 1:09 AM
5	For them to be happy and to find a career path that intrinsically motivates them.	11/14/2016 8:10 PM
6	Confidence, love of learning, emotionally healthy, well-rounded, joyful.	11/14/2016 12:03 PM
7	That they have a love of learning. That they are confident and happy. That they are socially aware and responsible. That they have an ability to interact with all ages. To be kind, gentle and considerate. That they work hard and at their best. That they love and encourage others. That they can happily explore and question the world around them.	11/14/2016 6:14 AM
8	To get my daughter back to who she was before she was broken in school. She has improved greatly but still has some way to go. She is working on GCSE topics with a view to do these and move on to f.e and h.e	11/14/2016 3:39 AM
9	To be confident independent learners and thinkers.	11/13/2016 7:43 PM
10	.	11/13/2016 3:20 PM
11	To be happy and fulfil their dreams and have the confidence to be themselves	11/13/2016 3:05 PM
12	to be happy	10/14/2016 8:26 AM
13	Happiness and confidence	9/4/2016 2:14 AM
14	That they are happy, healthy and have a well rounded outlook on life. I hope they find joy in learning. I hope they discover what it is they want to do, and have the abilities and strength of character to pursue and achieve it. I do not limit this to education, I my daughter wants to have children and raise a family, then I am 100% behind her.	9/2/2016 3:03 PM
15	To learn how to be happy and trust they know what is best for themselves.	9/2/2016 2:08 PM
16	Love of learning	9/2/2016 2:03 PM
17	they can cope outside the home, they can be whatever they want to be, they can flourish	8/26/2016 7:17 AM
18	health and happiness, what else!	8/25/2016 12:20 PM
19	deeper understanding of our faith, academic success, choices for the future	8/24/2016 11:40 AM
20	confidence decency morality	8/22/2016 2:48 AM
21	they achieve everything they can without the pressures of having to assimilate in mainstream	8/21/2016 6:45 AM
22	They achieve whatever they want, not what government say they have to achieve	8/20/2016 10:29 AM
23	Happiness, aware of own strengths and difficulties, able to navigate adult world, focussed on growth rather than attainment	8/18/2016 7:27 AM
24	To be happy healthy and wise	8/9/2016 3:25 PM
25	To be confident, generous, capable members of society who find their passion and pursue it into adulthood.	8/9/2016 11:48 AM
26	For him to be happy. For him to find his passion and find a way forward that enables him future security and happiness whatever that may be. He is only ten now we have plenty of time but he is already very driven towards his passions I hope to be able to continue to facilitate this.	8/9/2016 12:34 AM
27	To be happy	8/8/2016 3:31 PM
28	To be happy and remain engaged with learning for life	8/8/2016 3:22 PM
29	to be happy	8/8/2016 3:01 PM

30	I'd love her to go to university, like I did, but she is more arty and less academic so I accept that will probably not happen. As she has ASD our main hope is for her to become independent, with good social skills and the ability to support herself in a career she enjoys and excels in.	8/8/2016 2:59 PM
31	For her to continue to have the opportunity to follow her passions and achieve her ambitions. Above all, I want her to be happy.	8/8/2016 2:47 PM
32	For them to be happy in all aspects of life.	8/8/2016 2:29 PM
33	Whatever they want to achieve.	8/8/2016 2:25 PM
34	Happy, healthy, and at peace with their individuality. Independent and financially secure, too.	8/2/2016 11:06 AM
35	Going on to further education college	7/28/2016 12:18 PM
36	To be confident, secure and happy. With a sense of self that allows them to find the path that suits them, and the skills they need to pursue it.	7/28/2016 10:31 AM
37	That he will be happy and healthy and achieves the best that he can. Anything beyond that will be a bonus, he's likely to need lifelong support.	7/28/2016 9:20 AM
38	That they are happy and can follow their interests.	7/13/2016 10:15 AM
39	To be happy and capable now and as adults. To have a good understanding of what they want from life and how to get it. To be strong in themselves but also kind.	7/12/2016 9:17 AM
40	To be happy. Nothing more.	7/12/2016 6:28 AM
41	To be happy, confident young people, with a strong sense of who they are and what they enjoy and a good range of real life, social and academic skills and experiences that will enable them to succeed in their chosen career	7/12/2016 6:12 AM
42	For them to find a love of learning and follow their passions	7/12/2016 5:58 AM
43	To have an actual education, instead of being taught the type of things that make one ideal to be a wage slave.	7/12/2016 4:03 AM
44	That they are happy, confident and social with all ages not just their peers.	7/12/2016 2:48 AM
45	To be open minded, happy, and learn through their own avenues with a genuine interest. To have life skills I feel schools do not help with.	7/12/2016 2:34 AM
46	That they are able to go out into the world as confident and balanced individuals who know themselves and are able to achieve whatever they set their minds to.	7/7/2016 11:49 PM
47	That he is happy and enjoys his life	7/7/2016 10:26 PM
48	For them to be happy and confident	7/7/2016 1:04 PM
49	That they are aware of their place in the world. That they see life, education, employment and happiness as one package, not separate stages that are achieved as age dictates. Learning is lifelong and work is about so much more than money. I want them to be self reliant as opposed to dependant on the state either for education, finances or employment. Happiness is achieved through hard work, high self esteem and self reliance.	7/7/2016 12:53 PM
50	to be as happy as possible under the circumstances of their disabilities.	7/7/2016 12:20 PM
51	To grow up confident and well rounded with faith in God, important life skills and able to attend a course for home educated children to take GCSEs	7/6/2016 5:21 PM
52	He has a strong career plan which needs Coventry Uni, and so he's off to college in September to do A levels.	7/6/2016 8:53 AM
53	She has lots...like most 13 yr olds..	7/6/2016 6:52 AM
54	To feel confident in herself and her abilities and to realise that she can achieve anything she sets her mind to. Education doesn't start and finish with school, education is called life!	7/6/2016 6:10 AM
55	That we will be left alone to completely get on with things for generations to come. I believe in total freedom in education - i.e. repeal the laws relating to compulsory education and all associated garbage - like the insistence on obtaining GCSE grade C in Maths and English and staying in education and training until 18 unless you have 3 'A' levels or equivalent at Grade C. Stop forcing young people to waste the prime years of their lives going to university if it doesn't suit them. That employers will recognise that qualifications are not the be all and end all and that not all people like to write reams and that not having qualifications does not mean a person is stupid, or ignorant or uneducated.	7/6/2016 5:27 AM
56	That we develop them as well rounded, confident, curious, well-read, physically fit, ambitious individuals.	7/6/2016 4:58 AM
57	To find her own way, feel loved and feel content in herself	7/4/2016 12:06 PM

58	To be happy, enjoy learning without pressures of targets and government initiatives. To find the thing that they love and be able to build a future for themselves on that.	7/4/2016 5:54 AM
59	I hope that they have the confidence to do something that makes them happy in their future careers.	7/4/2016 5:32 AM
60	To be happy	7/4/2016 5:26 AM
61	To be happy and love the career path they choose. To be intrinsically motivated in their learning so their love if it is never destroyed. To respect autonomy and liberty for themselves and others.	7/3/2016 3:20 AM
62	Happiness and hopefully university!	6/30/2016 1:27 AM

Q37 Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. As a further part of this study, I am inviting participants to attend focus groups where home-education can be discussed in more depth. There is also the opportunity for some home-educated children and young people to participate in a series of creative events which will hopefully culminate in a local exhibition. If you wish to receive more information about either of the above projects, please provide your email address. Please note that this will not compromise your anonymity.

Saturday 8th April - [redacted] The Peraltas

Today I visited the Peraltas for the second and final time to complete the evaluation and share the I poems with them.

When I arrived [redacted] was in the kitchen making some banana and chocolate ice cream. She was unsupervised and enjoying herself! [redacted] was awake this time, and she had been watching some TV. The girls were not asked to stop what they were doing, nor were they fazed by my arrival. I spoke to [redacted] (father) for a while and the children gradually came to the table of their own accord.

[redacted] was telling me all about her ice cream and her new favourite YouTube (one of which she mentioned came from Devon!).

Like before we sat around the kitchen table and [redacted] hovered in the background. The family were keen to update me on what had changed since my last visit. [redacted] had now begun playing the violin and [redacted] had begun combat, as well as a Science GCSE. She is still really enthused by Maths! Mrs Peralta had also run another art based session since my last visit which had been a success.

Mrs Peralta commented that she had really enjoyed been part of my research and had had subsequent discussions with home-edges. Both [redacted] and [redacted] said that they had also enjoyed the process. I think this seemed most genuine from [redacted], being my eldest participant. She really had an opportunity to step back from her life and share her thoughts which I think she valued. Additionally she was interested in my research and by me being at university. She seemed inspired to pursue her interests (currently in cinematography).

I began by sharing the I poems and, in hindsight, perhaps this should have been done more creatively. Perhaps I could have read them aloud? Or I could have sent them to the family prior to my visit?

It felt a little uncomfortable to begin with and these feelings were definitely coming from Mrs Peralta who said that she struggled to read in silence. I had offered to read [redacted] aloud (as I was aware reading was not something she had been confident with in the past), but [redacted]

Home of [redacted]

ote - 078224 359412

Address - 07811 914 068

078224 359412

Friday 27th January

Visit to [redacted] Forest School.

9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

- Began by looking at [redacted] group (the older children). They stay there for the whole day. Weekly sessions on a Friday
- Relaxed environment. Run by volunteer and overseen by paid members of staff
- Spoke to two volunteers. One of which works at the Met Office. Highly educated. Han supervised a psychology PhD at the University of [redacted] and done her own post-doc research. Other volunteer had a wealth of experience and was currently working as a support assistant at a local school, doing breakfast and after school club. She reflected on the differences she has seen and says that she gets frustrated with the clubs because children are told what to do rather than it being child-led, as it is

at forest school.

- The older group had free time where they were allowed to roam an enclosed area of the site. They organised their own games amongst themselves and much like I had felt like an outsider who had tried to build links to find a way to access this community, I spoke to one child who felt very left out. He told me that he had only been attending for three weeks. I wondered whether, like me, this child needed to be 'accepted'.
- The children ran around with walkie-talkies, playing a game which they initiated themselves.
- Soon after, I was told to visit the kindergarten group. This group was for under 5's, and parents accompanied the children. I was particularly struck by the level of freedom that the young people were given. Climbing trees and starting fires with minimal supervision. I could not help but reflect on my days of teaching, and wonder what would Ofsted make of this?
- The toddler group was fairly small this week (due to illnesses and possibly the

weather - it was freezing!) The toddlers were wrapped up in multiple layers, waterproof dungarees, hats and gloves. I was in my jeans and still frozen!

The session began around a fire with the activity leader singing a song to greet the puppet that each of the children had chosen. He played the tubelike and from the beginning it felt like there was a certain amount of contact given to the children. Each of them was asked if they needed the stick for their puppet to be very fast or slow, loud or quietly.

The children were then told to dismantle a den and then build their own ones. Parents were around to support the process, but I could not believe the large branches that these children were moving! They were bigger than themselves! Again, I wondered how this would have gone down if I had attempted this sort of activity whilst I had been tracking.

There were five parents in this group, one of which I had already visited at her home and interviewed, with her children. So, I spent my majority of time with two of the other Mums. (All of the parents

were mothers) I asked whether fathers attended too and I was told that they had done in the past.

- Each week seemed to involve different activities. One of the Mums proudly showed me a sponge cake that they had cooked on the Dutch oven the previous week. She said that they have an outdoor pizza oven too which they use at the end of each term.

- Like with the children, I let the Mums tell me what they wanted to about home-ed. They took the conversation in all sorts of directions. A large portion of my work has been recorded and will therefore be transcribed, but there were points when it was not possible to record, e.g. when I was helping to light a fire, and comments were made. I definitely felt that one mother spoke to me more freely when I was not recording.

- In fact, she told me about how she felt heavily criticised by society by her choice to home-educate. In fact, she said she was not able to share this decision with some family members when they visited at Christmas. This was echoed by another Mum

school. 1900's

1900's

- who said that her children had been 'punished' in a way by not being given financial help that their relatives had been given. The mother seemed quite grounded and acknowledged that home-ed was not for everyone, but did not want to be criticised by people who knew very little about it.
- From one mother in particular, I got the sense that she did not appreciate mainstream society. She frequently referred to 'mainstream'.
 - ↳ No TV. (similar to first family, pseudonym known)
 - ↳ Always child to watch 'Hey Dougie'.
 - Pure, no hidden messages.
 - ↳ Had been a sociology teacher for past 10s.
 - ↳ Felt that school 'misinforms'.
 - ↳ Only teacher select things.
 - ↳ Wants child to discover things for himself.
 - ↳ Talked about the feeling of "humiliation" in reference to schools and being forced to participate in all sports rather than ones they were interested in.
- First time in this research process that I have felt a little bit as though I want to challenge the parental views. Were they more

extreme than other participants?

- Were parents projecting their own experience onto their children? Own experience of school? Was it about meeting their children's needs or their own needs?

Saturday -

4/02/17

- Felt very welcomed by this family.
- Was a sense of them guarding/protecting what was said by the children. The mother asked if she could join at the table and observe. However, I felt she was there to add details and defend/justify her choices.
- The father was involved too! Although not at the table, he was in the kitchen (which was open plan) so his presence was felt and he did offer comments from time to time.
- This family referred to feeling privileged to have the opportunity to home-ed so the father earned enough to enable the mother to stay at home and (provide) the education.
- The mother certainly seemed very knowledgeable about home-ed and mentioned many names that have influenced her philosophies

Sally

Listener's Response: I found Sally's reflections very mature and was impressed with some of the words that she used. Such as 'ambitious,' 'dystopia' and 'exasperated.' I noticed that she raised the notion of 'responsibility' a few times, both in terms of her learning and in terms of her role in the family. What I particularly liked was that this sense of responsibility appeared to come from herself and it was not a role which had been imposed on her. For example, she talked about wanting to cook a weekly meal for the family. Sally was able to identify her strengths and weaknesses, such as her talents for playing musical instruments and musical theatre. She noted that she was working on her ICT skills, but felt that her brother, Sam, was better at this than herself. I was struck by Sally's brief reflections about being bullied at school, but perhaps more so by her new found sense of empowerment. She considers herself as having more confidence now. I felt that Sally has begun to feel more settled in her home-educated environment and is able to develop the skills that she needs for her future. She is certainly an ambitious and tenacious individual who wants to go on to do a plethora of exciting careers.

Having had the opportunity to listen to the audio several times it made me more aware of the dynamic between siblings Sally and Sam. There were times when I was discussing issues that Sally had raised and Sam interjected. Sometimes these interjections were additions to what Sally was saying and sometimes they were off-topic. Sally dealt with these interjections and changes of course well. Allowing her brother time to air his opinions and maturely bringing the conversation back to the topic.

This is something which I need to address as a researcher and perhaps in hindsight, it would have been better for me to speak to the children on an individual basis. Although, there were some excellent discussions that the children had and I feel that the anecdotes they had about school, really added value to the conversation. It allowed me an insight into their thoughts and emotions regarding school.

Sally's I Poem

Friendship

I have a friend called Alicia

I see her there.

I didn't go to school with them.

There's this one girl...who I got on with really well.

We, erm, kinda didn't argue that much.

We never really split up or anything.

When I look back, friends could be a bit ropey.

I was bullied quite a bit at school so...

I have loads and loads of friends across the country.

We get to know people.

We usually go with the Christian Home-School Group

We meet up with them.

I don't think I've met anyone my age actually.

I do have a few older ones but most of them are younger.

They're quite mature.

I was bullied like three times.

I didn't think of it as bullying at the time.

Now, I realise it was.

My Skills

I'm not very good at long distance running but I can do good sprints.

I swim.

I'm gonna do trampolining.

I like cycling.

I wouldn't say I'm particularly sporty.

I wouldn't say I'm a girly, girl.

I don't wear make-up actually.

But I'm not a tomboy either.
I'm quite musical.
I play a number of instruments.

Home-Education

We started home-schooling.
We work harder for better results.

They do a lot of work.

In general we think school is bad.
We found home-school better for our family.
We get to see our parents more.
We don't have a carer or anything.
We have babysitters sometimes.
We don't argue as much.
We still argue sometimes.
We see each other a lot more.
We kinda all get on the same.

Most people when we say we're home-schooled say, "Oh, that's so cool."

Sometimes they think we're kind of strange.

Sometimes they think we're cool.

Sometimes they think we're just...different.

We'll go into town.

"Oh, aren't you at school today?"

"No, we're home-schooled."

We get really, really exasperated.

So now, we're like, "No, can't be bothered."

Sometimes people are negative about it.

Sometimes people are positive about it.

You're...it's almost like you're in charge of your work

If you don't work hard, like properly...

You'd get really bad results.

You have more responsibility.

Sometimes they say “you must be brave” ...to Mummy and Daddy.

The Future

I'd like to be an author, missionary, doctor and an actress.

I'd probably do a few.

I suppose I'll just see when the time comes.

I really want to go to other countries.

I want to see if I can audition for musicals.

If I get in, I get in.

Most kids go to primary school, secondary, go to college, go to university, graduate, get a job,
get another job, retire, die, etc.

I am definitely going to go to university and do my GCSEs and everything like that.

I'll prepare for them at home.

I'll go to a place more formal to do them.

I can see my world is definitely different from Sam's.

Sam

Listener's Response: Sam became most animated when he was recounted stories about school. He was able to give many examples of what he disliked and throughout my time with the family, Sam's preference for home-education really shone through. When I was analysing the transcript and composing the poem, I was worried that many of Sam's expressions had not included "I" or "we." Sam is a lovely boy, who uses humour and off-hand comments and interjections, which I felt carried a lot of meaning. However, having read through Sam's poem (and been through the transcript and audio numerous times), I am confident that it captures the thoughts and feelings that he shared with me well. I will be interested to see what his reaction is when I share the poem with him.

For me, the themes that seem to have emerged from Sam's tale, are feelings of inadequacy, bullying and someone that is growing in confidence. Sam seems to be confident with his older sister, Sally, and will happily correct her if he thinks she is wrong! I felt that he was an individual that liked attention, or perhaps it was more to do with his ideas jumping around. I got this impression because he often interjected conversations that I was having with Sally. Although, I wonder if it had just been him and I, whether he would have been confident enough to share as much information as he did. For example, when he was given the opportunity to talk, or questions were directed at him, he appeared to be less forthcoming. He seemed far happier having a background role and making additional comments.

Sam did not seem worried about the future and was curious about lots of things. His interests included ICT, coding and History of Art.

Sam's I Poem

Home-Education

I went in when I was starting Year Five.

It's a lot more free...I think.

Sometimes I...am just told to do, like, whatever I want.

We do the History of Art.

Then we do proper Art.

Sometimes I have to do something set.

I've done Astronomy and Botany.

Family

We see each other a lot more.

We have buddies basically.

We're better friends because we're similar, basically.

We have special friends.

We go to conferences.

We go to summer camps.

We have groups.

We go to town quite a lot on Saturdays.

It's funny because we can go on any day of the week.

We do have our normal school friends round as well.

They're jealous.

Skills

I know what I'd go for.

I call it History, but it's a mix of History and Art.

I'm good at short distance running.

I'm...my legs warm up pretty fast.

I can run quite fast, quite quickly.

I play the guitar.

I'm the best at making PowerPoints.

I know how to do designs, transitions, effects.

School

Basically, you got dragged out of class.

In the Big Write I had to come out.

I am not mentioning any names.

In my ideal world, I would be a gingerbread man and live in a gingerbread houses, but I don't think that one counts.

I was really annoyed, because at school...

...they brought in this new thing.

We did...computer Maths and computer Literacy.

I don't really know what it was.

I just wasn't fast enough at typing to do it.

Like, "You fail, try again."

I got really annoyed with it.

They gave us this app thing.

They emailed books to us.

We had this webpage.

We'd load it up.

You'd have to answer a question.

You'd just forget everything.

I got really annoyed with it.

I had to read all of this computer book.

You'd have to answer a question.

Then you'd just forget everything.

I got them all wrong.

It's just 'cos...you don't read the side text.

The Future

I've not really decided.

Maybe an engineer...I also thought of a job as a coder.

They get quite high pay.

I want to go to Canada.

All I'm thinking about is getting a flat with my friend.

Next year, I will be a whizz at Gmail.

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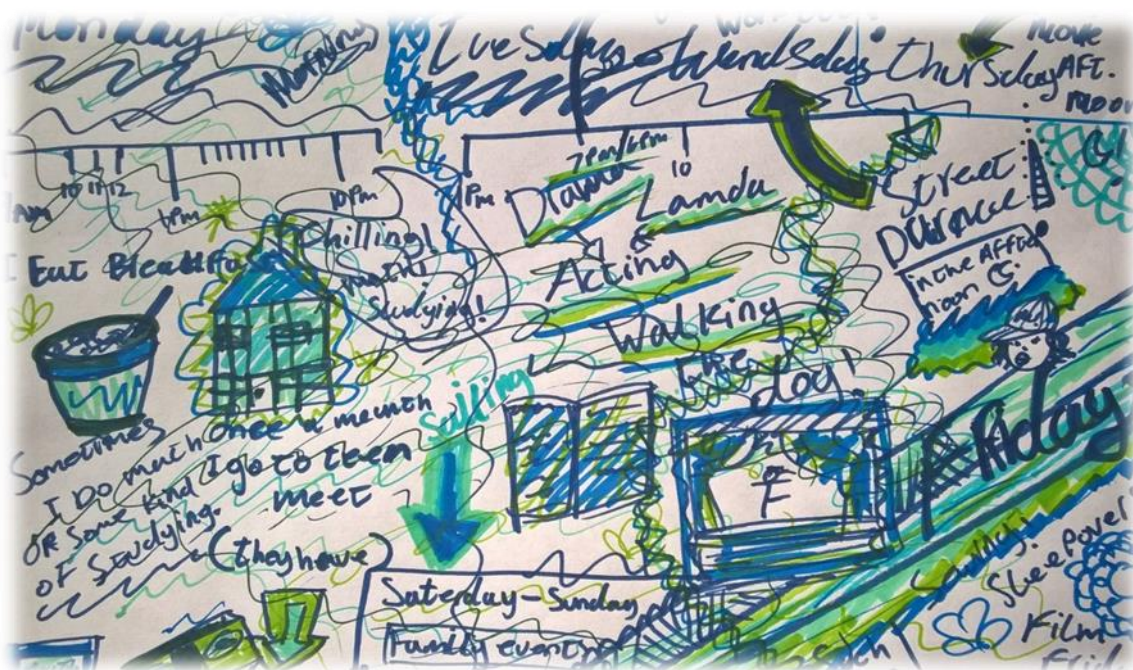
Sigourney

Listener's Response: Sigourney was a quirky young girl who grew in confidence throughout the conversation. She readily engaged in discussions about home-education. Sigourney was clearly very much in favour of home-education and was able to compare this to a brief period that she had spent at school (two terms). Although, Sigourney's parents were present throughout our discussion I felt that Sigourney was not overly inhibited.

Listening to the audio again, I am particularly struck with just how animated Sigourney is. She speaks passionately about some topics, such as the social dynamics that are at play at school. Sigourney's curiosity about the world and passion is not amiss either. She is ambitious, talking about wanting to do her Maths GCSE and wanting to study at university.

Sigourney has a mature outlook on some aspects of the world but combines this with a playful, more innocent childhood angle. She is clearly very imaginative and this comes through with some of the anecdotes and stories she tells.

I particularly like the point in the conversation when Mrs. Peralta refers to home-education as being tailored and bespoke, and Sigourney adds, "like and expensive coat." Not only do I like the analogy of home-education being something expensive and well-suited to the individual but the way Sigourney was following the conversation and then able to make her addition, demonstrated a positive relationship with her mother. She was able to contribute suggesting that she felt her ideas were as valuable as her mother's, which they were.



Sigourney's I Poem

Leaving School

I said to Mum over lunch in the garden... yes, and Dad.

I don't want to go to school anymore.

I was, for like, two terms and I was only in Reception.

(*Whispers*) I did not like it.

I have lots of friends.

Well not lots. I've got four main friends.

Three friends that I know very well that go to school.

That was the sleepover that I was at.

Sailing

We started sailing when we moved to *****.

We have to like go in the morning though.

I take a little girl out

I like to take out Izzy who is a really sweet little girl.

I've taught her.

She's really come on since I first met her.

I'd say she's a really lovely girl, so passionate about the environment and animals.

People just, I guess, got the wrong impression of her.

I thought, "Oh why have they put me with Izzy?"

I took her on my boat, and got talking and found out that she's a lovely, sweet person.

I think people have got to just talk to her.

I spoke to her like a normal person and I taught her to sail.

I think she just needs to be taught in a nice way.

Sibling Relationship

I have to live with *her*!

I mean some sisters don't, but me and Christie, we annoy each other.

We fight.

I *don't* punch her.

She punches me but...

We delicately fight.

We don't properly fight like because that's...

Well I'm over ten so I'm liable for my actions.

So, I can't punch.

But I don't think violence at any age is acceptable.

If a baby murdered someone, it's still the baby's fault so you should put it in baby prison.

I don't think violence is okay for anyone.

I just have a strong belief in that area.

I think serial killers should be electrocuted and then fed to polar bears.

Choices

If we fancy doing something, we will search it.

If we don't want an activity then we decide to stop.

Like a kid can hate maths with a passion and...they'll have to do it though.

I kinda wish that schools were open libraries.

I really love Maths.

I wish I could just go to school just to learn Maths.

Then again, ... they all teach the subjects the same way.

Some kids might not get it if they're taught that way.

The way I learn in Maths is, it has to be, explained to me quite kind of, not like droning on and on.

I'm quite visual as well.

I like to do the Maths books which... there is no nonsense.

I don't like the ones where they say oh, "Timmy did this.." And then they have a whole character back story like Star Wars.

I'm just like, just get to the question!

Just show me the numbers!

The Future

When me and Christie move out, Mum and Dad are going to live in the forest in like...the
foresty bit of Canada.

I wanna be a detective.

I don't think I'll ever grow up.

I love acting. I really do.

I'm not in a hurry to do my GCSEs.

I mean I'm really passionate about doing my GCSEs.

I *want* to do them.

Lifestyle

You don't have to freak out about my grades either.

I'd rather live like this.

We have everything we need.

We have the basics. Food, a roof over our head, warmth, everything we really need.

I'm not really fussed about holidays because I guess, home-education is a holiday.

I want to be one of those really cool old people like Obi-Wan Kenobi.

I'm still going to be literate.

I think, with studying, if you do it in different locations, you'll just kinda...you won't be stressed.

I think Maths just really clicked for me.

I'm really enjoying it.

I understand it more now.

I've come to.....restrict myself.

I'm not one of those girls who is like, oooh sugar, ooh diet.

I guess sometimes, I just don't fancy sweets.

Social Hierarchy

I just think people can't be kinda, put into groups.

They all share some kinda of traits.

I think in school, she almost feels pressure.

She's really confident around me.

I've got a theory that because she's not with us in school, she acts kind of differently around us.

She's a lovely girl and doesn't need to change.

My bestie.

We all have things in common that make us friends.

I think home-ed is just a relaxed kind of...I mean it's taught differently.

We are relaxed, we learn.

Christie

Listener's Response: Christie had never been to school although there was a time that she wanted to go, however, due to lengthy waiting lists this never happened. Christie is glad that she is home-educated. It was somewhat difficult to maintain her interest and involvement in the conversation as her parents and older sister, Sigourney, were very chatty and tended to dominate the majority of the dialogue. I felt that when Christie wanted to share something, she did, but it was a lengthy period she was required to concentrate for and she lost interest when there was not an activity to be completed.

Christie was very bubbly and imaginative. She would often make comments that were not related to the topic being discussed, again, perhaps a sign of boredom.

Christie's I Poem

All About Me

I've never been to school in my entire life but I have thought about going to school but then ...when I got up early, I was like "Nooo, too early."

My typical week...getting up at 11 or 12.

The latest that I've gotten up is 2 or 1.

I had a dream last night where we got this really adorable dog but then we got a really vicious dog and then the vicious dog killed that really adorable dog.

I didn't even have time to stroke it.

I can juggle.

I like sailing when it is raining.

I like weird.

Sibling Relationship

I always used to copy Milly.

I have to live with you!

You once punched me in the stomach.

I made you jump.

We had this like Dracula mask.

I put it on and I hid behind the wall there and Milly came out and I went, "rawr."

And she went, "arghhh."

If Milly annoys me, I say let's have a fight on the family bed.

We try and get each other off the bed.

Mrs. Peralta

Listener's Response: Mrs. Peralta was thoroughly enthusiastic and willing to engage in my research. I had not planned for parents to take as active a role as Mrs. Peralta did but I am grateful for her involvement. To begin with, I was concerned that Mrs. Peralta was desperate to act as a gatekeeper to her children and monitor what they disclosed to me. I now believe that whilst she did want to hear what her children had to say, it was not to act as a filter but to actively reflect on her family's thoughts. I certainly got the feeling that Mrs. Peralta was worried about what I might think of her family and worried about judgement. However, I did my best to reassure her that I was not there to make judgements, I was just looking to explore people's views on home-education.

She seemed genuinely appreciative of having someone there to talk to about her experiences and home-education journey. Mrs. Peralta's comments following my second visit and having read the I poem that I had created gave me a sense of accomplishment with my research. Below is an extract from an email she sent me:

“ Oh WOW!!! I've just read and absorbed your poem. I LOVE IT.

Thank you so much. I've had the space to read and reflect on it now and find it very moving indeed.

Thank you for your time and interest invested in our little family. It's been a pleasure and a privilege to meet you and be part of your incredible journey in your education.

You are an inspiration, certainly to Mills. Go for it, Kav... you'll storm it.”

Mrs. Peralta's I Poem

External Perceptions of Home-Education

I think sort of, they do enough.

I walk away from a conversation remembering, "Oh my gosh and they do so much more than that."

I've almost gone through a process of being concerned about what people thought- not necessarily concerned about what people thought, just anticipating their reactions.

I no longer feel the need to have something to say to anybody, because the girls can speak for themselves.

We had a not very pleasant experience in Tesco's.

I think Milly was about nine and I had the girls with me.

I boycotted Tesco's for three years.

This lady said, "Ooh, another holiday?"

Milly said, "No, I'm home-educated."

It's like I just told her the worst news possible.

She just went, "What?! I don't agree with that. What about the socialisation?"

I was in quite a buoyant mood anyway and I said, "Well it's fine, she does Forest School, she does Rainbows."

She just went, "Nah. Nah. Nah. Nah. There's no way, don't be ridiculous."

She was just dismissive.

I threw the shopping in the basket and my knuckles were white, just through being so angry with myself for not...reacting in a way where I...sort of...oh it doesn't matter what you think kind of thing.

I'm not that bothered.

Activities in the Home

I've just remembered another thing.

We've started.

We just had our first session last week.

It's something that I really wanted to do for the girls.

I think this is important because I do a lot for mixed groups as well.

I just said a maximum of six of your friends.

I did a twenty minute tutorial on abstract.

They had a still life in the middle of the table.

They er, had to paint it abstract style.

They did an amazing job.

It was just lovely and it ended so naturally for them.

They could chat about things they wanted to.

It's great having the lads here but I do think it's very important to foster good erm, you know female relationships.

I'm sure you probably appreciate as well.

Reflections On Our Journey

I don't know because when we started our journey, it was, erm...., it wasn't anything like it was now...

When we started there was one group.

There were a particular group of us who were primary in organising trips out, events, educational visits, meet ups at festivals...

There's a lot more people out there doing it.

A lot of the parents the Dads have been able to work from home, so that would also indicate the fact that they're either doing very well, or you know, because they can afford to have both parents at home.

That would be our ideal.

I do sort of have a number of mantras going on in my head occasionally just to help me through the day.

I do feel blessed and very privileged to witness their learning.

We do feel very lucky.

We had these discussions.

I think they just happened over decades really.

Myself, my experiences with education.

We both come from like, big families.

We both have probably pretty similar, er, education experiences.

But we both said, well what did we get out of that?

I spent eleven years of my life and to what?

I've heard the quote of where a school has actually informed er, them at a meeting, well, they're not here to socialise.

I wish I'd heard that when they were tiny.

I probably would've used that as a bit of a calming sort of thing for me.

It's okay, because I've never worried about their socialising ever.

They think if you're not in school then you're not seeing other children so you're not socialising.

They just accept it now.

We've gone through all of the "ooh secondary school."

It's up to them.

It's working for us.

I suppose the questions still do come.

I just think more people are aware of it.

I don't mind admitting.

We do have our wobbles.

They have wobbles about their children's education as well.

We never shame them.

We 'unschool' rather than home-educate.

Societal Developments

I just think about well where were we in the eighteen hundreds?

What were we doing?

We were making fires early in the morning.

We were going out.

We were working day to day, hand to mouth.

We were working with the light we had.

We didn't have to get up at eight, to be at work at nine.

And we didn't have to finish any form of education at three.

And we didn't have to catch a local horse to get home for half five or whatever.

Trades were turning into a real sort of academic sort of businesses where you needed accountants and auditors and people.

You needed sort of an institution, a format where you raised children to become literate.

You still haven't changed...the kids...the school system hasn't really altered that much.

Conferences and Styles of Home-Education

She gave us all a big bunch of quotes.

She gave us a special stone from New England.

You take a quote, you read the quote out.

Put the stone in your pocket and then every time you touch the stone you just remember this.

This has kinda been a bit of a sanity thing for me and our friends.

A lot of them still have screen limits.

They have restrictions on their children.

I suppose perceiving your children as partners.

They have their own equals.

Our Philosophies

I did this from when Milly was a new-born baby.

I would just leave things laying around.

I would just sort of leave like a couple of DVDs, or a pile of old postcards or just leave something.

They might wanna talk about it.

We can inspire them from that.

They have very much learned a lot of things themselves.

I've been, not hands off.

I've been there but not helicopter parenting, none of that.

There is a lot of dialogue in our learning.

Until we first started out, we were like, ahhh, what do we do?

It is just sort of, what suits you, what works for your children.

I know so much more now than I did then.

It would be quite remiss of us to say, right, I've nailed it, I've nailed parenting.

Ella

Listener's Response: Ella was different to my other participants because she had experience of both home-education and school so was able to make informed comparisons. Ella sat next to her mother during the activities and conversation, and her mother was also heavily involved in the conversation. I felt that this set-up worked really well and Ella was able to elaborate, agree, disagree or question statements that her mother made; much like some participants had done with their siblings. Ella has a younger brother who attends school and has done since he was five. He showed little interest in participating and left the room.

Ella was extremely calm and she engaged well in the tasks. I did notice that she had a different approach to the tasks and she very carefully thought about her responses, or planned them prior to starting them. Ella asked a lot more questions than the other children and it felt as though she did not want to get anything wrong. I am aware that this may also be a result of researcher bias. As Ella explained her educational background, I was aware that she now attends school, so it may be that I was more attentive to her questioning behaviours which some may consider to be more synonymous with a school environment.

Listening to Ella, I felt a sense of confusion. She was clearly happy when she was home-educated and she said that she is happy she attends school. Ella talked about being glad she now attends school, reflecting that she learns more at school and would have had to go to school at some point. It seemed to me that Ella was flexible, friendly and had developed the skills to help her cope with whichever environment she found herself in.

As with all of the case studies, context is important. I think that Ella's parents' separation has probably influenced her opinions related to her schooling. She is aware that her mother is no longer in financial position to continue home-education even if she wanted to. I wonder whether these circumstances have contributed to Ella's easy-going approach to slotting into school life.

Ella's I Poem

Transition

I started going to school in Year 2.

I went to Nursery but that was kind of for fun.

I liked it there.

I just enjoyed the cold compress.

I would've had to go to school anyway.

I'm glad I started when I did

'cos I started in the beginning of Year Two.

I didn't want to start halfway through.

'Cos then you're like...you have to stand there and...

I had loads of friends that were in there.

We had loads of friends.

We have to do homework.

I like the friends I've made.

Everyone else goes to school.

But I-I literally went to school.

I didn't gradually go half days.

Everyone else used to come in, look around.

I literally, one morning, went to school.

I'd never been there before.

I think, well my teacher was really cool.

I didn't feel like I was the new girl.

I felt like I just...went into the class.

I think they recognised me from Nursery.

I don't enjoy the class because my teacher's voice is boring.

But...I like the playground.

I am glad I went.

Friendships

I don't know if I would've been as confident with littler ones or older people...

Because in home-school you're not with the same age.

You're with older people and younger people.

That's why I'm friends with older people as well as younger people.

My Week

We used to learn the time, how to tell the time.

And we used to learn French.

I could speak lots of French but now I can't remember any of it.

I remember going on the trampoline quite a lot.

I only really remember Monday.

Oh yeah, we used to do drama groups, didn't we?

What did we do on Tuesdays?

We used to always play schools.

I used to play schools with *****.

Granny used to do us like a sheet of Maths and we used to do it.

I remember the two ladies.

They did my party.

Do we do anything on Thursday?

Volcanoes! We went in the woods over there.

We got lost!

We got bugs and we put the thingies in like little...collect them and stuff.

And we built fires and stuff...and toasted marshmallows.

Did we do anything on Friday, Mum?

I remember playing on the trampoline-

-and dressing up in your clothes and then coming down in just tights and a top.

And you going, "You're supposed to wear a skirt with the tights."

And I'd go, "Oh, okay."

What do we do at the weekend?

We just kinda played.

I remember having fun.

I remember spending quite a lot of time with Granny as well.

She used to come up every week.

She still comes up every week.

Comparisons

I've learnt more from school, sorry.

I think I have.

They have more knowledge of not academic almost...more general knowledge.

Our school is religious.

Lifestyle Choices

We never used to have any electronical devices.

We've never had a telly and it's torture.

Three-year-old boy. A THREE – YEAR – OLD – BOY has a telly in his room.

I haven't got a telly in my whole house.

I was so pleased with my Kindle.

I'm not allowed a phone until I'm sixteen.

You mean you used to have a telly in this house?

Why didn't you keep it?!

We watch Strictly!

We never watch a film together, except for Sing. Sing was good...and Moana.

My ninth birthday was the first time I'd been to the cinema.

We never used to have plasters either.

We've never had Calpol.

We've never had anything like that.

My Father

He hated school.

He hated, he absolutely hated school.

That's why he never comes to parents evening.

He's amazing.

He didn't feel like school was teaching him anything.

My Dad lives in London.

He doesn't like school.

But I think that he accepts that we have to go.

We have kinda got across to him that we do actually learn stuff.

Hobbies

I do street dance as well.

I do football and netball.

I broke the 40m, no the 80m record in Year 4 and I still hold it.

Aspirations

I want to do something like a vet or something, something like looking after people, but that's quite a full-on job.

I like helping other people, so...I dunno.

I think I would quite like to be a vet.

I like animals...and babies.

Because they're quite the same.

Appendix 13: Transcript Extract

*Below is an extract from a transcript which I highlighted during analysis process. Following 'The Listening Guide,' I highlighted any comments made by Mrs Peralta that were in first person **yellow**; any comments that were inclusive so involved the pronouns "we" or "us" are highlighted in **fuchsia** and comments that were excluding, so incorporated the pronouns, "them," "you" or "he/she" were highlighted in **turquoise**. The comments were then amalgamated and some were selected for the I poem. The main contributing factor to comments being selected was that they made sense independent of context. Comments containing the above pronouns but were not selected are underlined.*

Milly: No, we go to (...) which is like a drama group. All my mates go, it's so fun. And LAMDA is an exam. I did it last year, first time, got a distinction.

Interviewer: Well done!

Milly: Yesss! So happy, only one person in that group got 100% and that was Owen and he's in America now which is sad.

Mum: **He was really good.**

Hettie: You cried when he said goodbye to Milly.

Mum: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were you really good friends?

Hettie: They hugged.

Milly: It's a friend Hettie.

Mum: It was a friend hug.

Milly: Yeah, a friend hug. It's different.

Mum: **I miss his Mum. I still miss his Mummy.**

Dad: Do you stay in contact?

Mum: As best we can, yeah, as best we can. She's very busy.

(Pause)

Mum: What else do you do? Sometimes, there is just so much you do. When we get asked questions about what do they do and socialisation and **blahblahblah**. And then, **I dunno, depending on the person and... you can gauge their interest or not, you decide whether you want to engage further or just say, "they do enough and it's working right now for us thanks very much."**

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mum: It's precisely the same colour as your pen. (to Hettie)

(Laughter)

Mum: And erm, and then sometimes, when (coughs) excuse me, they're more interested and I think sort of, they do enough, and in my head I go through the days of the week and what they do. And often I walk away from a conversation remembering, "Oh my gosh and they do so much more than that." And I think "Oh no, they're going to go away thinking they don't do a lot." So you know, it's interesting to see how they – how Milly and Hettie - are perceiving their weeks. Cos often, I mean, I wouldn't sort of really, ever feel the need to ask them to do anything like this. Or I don't think...the only time they've done it is when we've done like, we've got a really busy week and we've got a little erm, sheets of paper with the days of the week on but-

Hettie: Mum, I can't spell (...)

Mum: Just get them to write out what it is they've got to do. They know, cos they've got lines to rehearse, for two...they've got an exam in May.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mum: They've got to write out, or I can write it out so they can refer back to it, but that's the only time we look and organise the week.

Interviewer: What's that exam? Is that the LAMDA?

Mum: The LAMDA exams, yeah, yes.

Interviewer: And is it something that you're worried about? Other people's perceptions?

Mum: Well, mmm, we've been doing this since Milly was...

Milly: Tiny.

Mum: Tiny.

Milly: I said to Mum over lunch in the garden...

Mum: And Dad.

Milly: Yes, and Dad. I don't want to go to school anymore.

Interviewer: So you were at school?

Milly: Erm, I was, for like, two terms and I was only in Reception.

Interviewer: Okay.

Milly: (*Whispers*) I did not like it.

Interviewer: And so that conversation emerged in the garden, did you say?

Milly: Yeah, it was in the summer. We were eating.

Mum: We had a barbecue didn't we?

Milly: A barbecue, yeah. And it just emerged.

Mum: But it was...

Milly: And one thing that Mum will never let me forget I said was, she said, "what about your friends?" And I said, " Oh it's okay Mum, we can still make appointments with them."

(Laughter)

Mum: Well we had already been quite aware of, quite aware of home-education anyway, but erm, erm, so I've almost gone through a process of being concerned about what people thought- not necessarily concerned about what people thought, just anticipating their reactions and just making sure I had something to say. I don't- I no longer feel the need to have something to say to anybody, because the girls can speak for themselves also. And I have gone through a stage of being erm, well we had a not very pleasant experience in Tescos. I think Milly was about nine and I had the girls with me. Erm, I think, yeah, I think (pauses)...I think Hettie, I think I just had Milly with me at the time so she was near me when we were packing the stuff away.

Milly: Mmm.

Mum: It was so bad I boycotted Tescos for three years. Didn't go into Tescos for three years. And because we have one here...we moved here and it's just round the corner...the thing is they're really lovely there. It's just a tiny one.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mum: So I go there... but this lady said, "Ooh, another holiday?" And Milly said, "No, I'm home-educated." Like that. And she just...eurgh, it's like I just told her the worst news possible. You know, well, no there's no school anymore for any children. That's it. School's finished for everybody. She just went, "What?! I don't agree with that. What about the socialisation?" And I then sort of...I was in quite a buoyant mood anyway and I said, "Well it's fine, she does Forest School, she does Rainbows." Or whatever it was at the time. I listed them all, der, der, der, der, der. But the woman was insistent. She just went, "Nah. Nah. Nah. Nah. There's no way, don't be ridiculous." And she was just dismissive. Harsh, wicked almost, and I was just, argh, I threw the shopping in the basket and my knuckles were white, just through being so angry with myself for not being sort of....reacting in a way where I...sort of...oh it doesn't matter what you think kind of thing. I'm not that bothered. Or, "That's okay, it works for us. We're happy, thanks, bye." And I was so like argh, I should've said so much more. And Milly at aged nine said, "Mum, let it go, it doesn't matter."

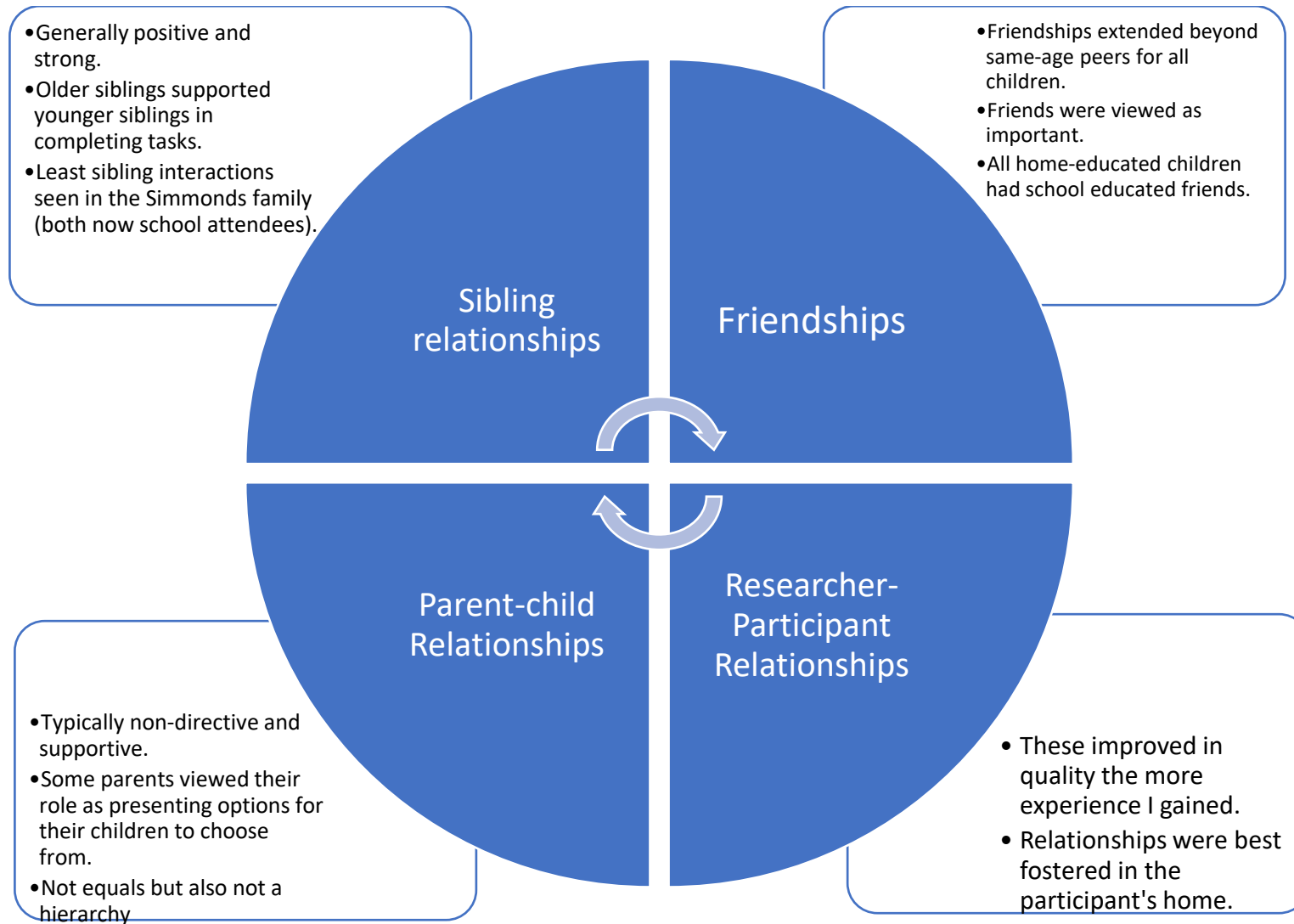
Interviewer: Yeah, you shouldn't have to justify your choices really.

Mum: No. And that's hard when you....

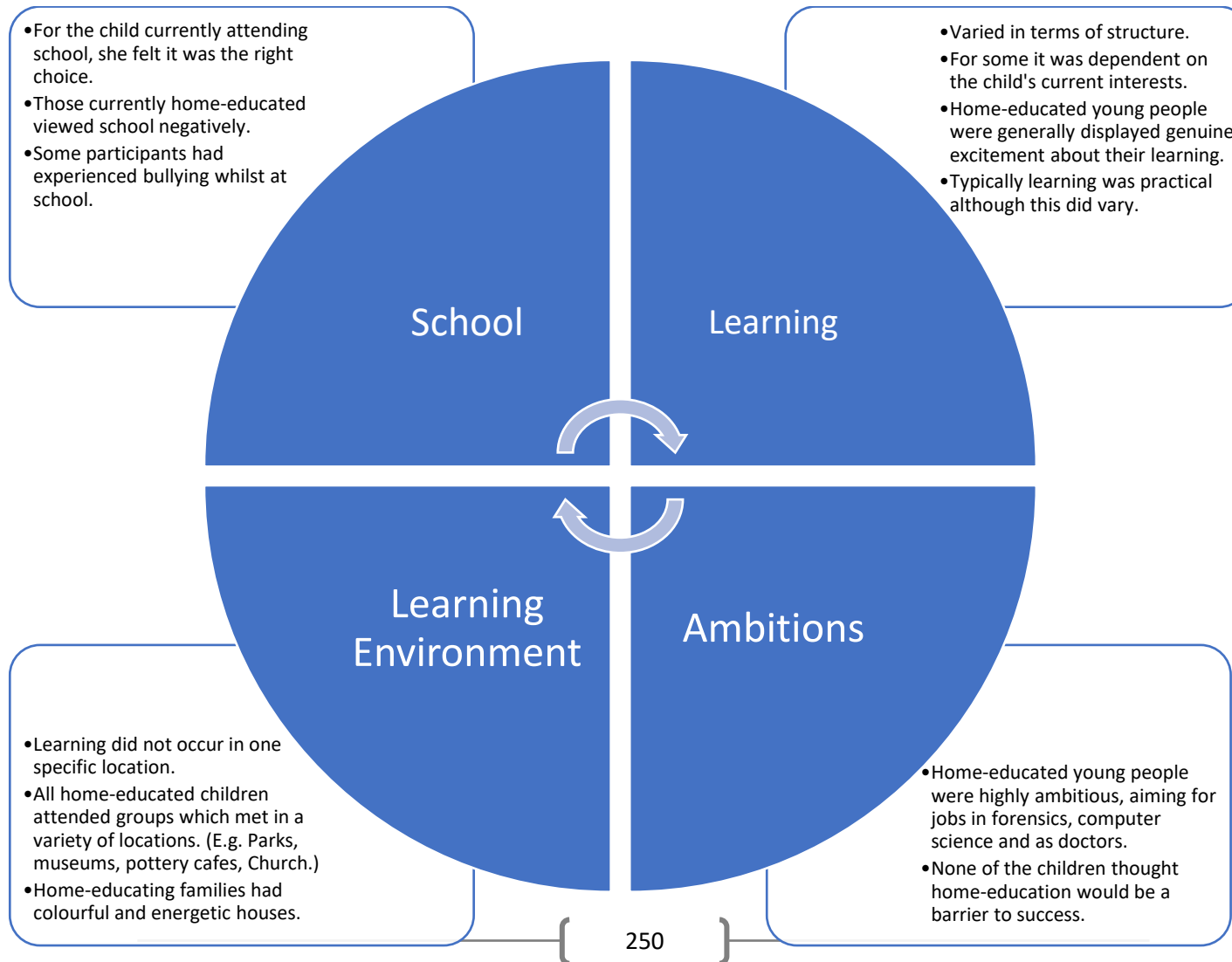
(...)

Milly: I've been mature (...)

Appendix 14: Across Case Thematic Map: Relationships



Appendix 15: Across Case Thematic Map: Views on Learning and Beyond



Appendix 16: Across Case Thematic Map: Home-Education and Lifestyle Choices

